ABSTRACT

BOST, TERRI MICHELE. An Exploratory Study of the Perceptions of North Carolina Cooperative Extension County Program Professionals about Integrated Programming. (Under the direction of Dr. R. Dale Safrit.)

This exploratory descriptive-correlational research examined perceptions of North Carolina Cooperative Extension county program professionals towards integrated programming and explored possible relationships between professionals' perceptions and selected personal and programmatic variables. The researcher used a census of North Carolina Cooperative Extension county program professionals employed as of September 1, 2009 (n = 482) and developed a web-based questionnaire, including two sections, based upon four research constructs identified from literature: 1. Collaboration, 2. Partnerships, 3. Discipline or Program Area, and 4. Issue-based Focus. Section I included eight items exploring each of the four constructs for a total of 32 items, using a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions. Section II included eight items collecting data on respondents' selected personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity) and programmatic variables (e.g., district, tenure, Extension title).

The instrument was reviewed by an expert panel for face and content validity and pilot tested with a randomly selected group consisting of one agent from each of the three main Extension program areas (e.g., Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development), one area agent, and one County Extension Director from each of the six Extension districts, totaling 30 individuals. Data were collected for three weeks between October 5 and 26, 2009. A final response rate of 47.1% was achieved.

Cronbach's alphas were calculated *post facto* for the four research constructs as measures of internal consistency, indicating reliability. The four resulting coefficients (.38 to .55) were lower than desired for exploratory research (Nunally, 1976). Subsequently, the researcher enlisted the assistance of a data analyst to run exploratory factor analysis. Five new research constructs resulted with satisfactory Cronbach's alphas (.63 to .76): 1. Partnerships and Collaborations, 2. Inter-personal Teamwork, 3. Issues-based Focus, 4. Multi-disciplinary Approach, and 5. Programmatic Foundation. All subsequent data analysis utilized the five new research constructs. Data were entered into a personal computer and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Based upon study data, responding county Extension program professionals "agreed" to "strongly agreed" that two new constructs of "Partnerships and Collaborations" and "Inter-personal Teamwork" are important to integrated programming in Extension. While the three remaining constructs' mean scores represented that respondents "disagreed" to "agreed" that they are important to integrated programming, two of the mean scores closely approximated the "agree" level of response. In the ordinal scale ranging from 1 to 4, one could reason that 2.5 would be the median, ambivalent, or neutral level of agreement. Consequently, mean scores for all five constructs were on the positive "Agree" side of the Likert scale. Low positive associations were found between all independent variables and summative mean scores for all five constructs.

The research findings suggest a need for a more defined integrated programming model to be utilized in developing educational programs. Consequently, the researcher developed the following new conceptual definition for integrated programming: "Integrated

programming in Cooperative Extension builds upon traditional programming models entailing planning, design and implementation, and evaluation, emphasizing an individual program professional's subject matter/discipline expertise yet utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach to address broad societal issues through inter-personal and inter-organizational collaborations and partnerships." The researcher recommends that county Extension program professionals be better trained in understanding and utilizing integrated programming, incorporating successful examples of integrated programming. Finally, the researcher believes that Extension administrators should consistently reinforce the importance of integrated programming by rewarding county program professionals successfully utilizing the model.

An Exploratory Study of the Perceptions of North Carolina Cooperative Extension County Program Professionals about Integrated Programming

by
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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
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PUBLICATIONS

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- Articles/Column for *The Stokes News* and *Winston-Salem Journal*, 2006-current

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Need for Integrated Programming

Because society's needs are rapidly changing, the concept of Cooperative Extension educational programming must also evolve, and the survival of Extension programming depends upon the ability of Extension program professionals to address both current and emerging issues facing their clientele (McDowell, 2004). Extension must find ways to serve new audiences, while continuing to meet the needs of existing clients. Currently, Extension program professionals are most often recognized and rewarded for educational programming mostly individually rather than collectively. In order to increase support for the Extension mission, clients should associate programming to the organization as a whole rather than to individual subject matter components. Furthermore, Extension is in need of a shift in its programming paradigm to gain stronger support from funding sources and to broaden its clientele base. Therefore, it is necessary to have exemplary and effective educational programs of the highest quality that meet identified needs, audiences that are aware that Extension uses the source of the information provided, and mechanisms to identify new clientele. These needs of Extension provide the basis for the importance of collaboration among program areas so that Extension as an organization is strengthened and more productive in acknowledging its mission.

Today's Extension clientele have a wider educational base and more access to information through the advancements in technology (Rockwell, Furgason, Jacobson, Schmidt, & Tooker, 1993). Therefore, Extension program professionals must provide more in-depth educational experiences, while also addressing high priority societal issues. Because there is a need to focus on societal issues, Extension program professionals individually often lack some of the skills and expertise to meet the variety of complex clientele needs. Furthermore, it is not realistic that each professional should possess the same knowledge and expertise, such as knowledge of agricultural advancements, environmental hazards, and levels of obesity. Specialized agents are in high demand, but they cannot be supported financially by county budgets. Thus, multicounty programming is becoming a useful delivery tool. This is also a step in the direction towards integrated programming among Extension professionals because one component of integrated programming is a multi-disciplinary approach.

New programming methods and foci are a necessity due to the decrease in federal funding and national leadership (McDowell, 2004). State governments are increasingly facing fiscal stagnation and/or retention; thus, state programs are being reduced in size and workforce, raising concerns about the relevance of Extension programming. With budgets and support remaining stagnant or decreasing for Extension, county program professionals must look for innovative ways to actively improve educational programs to make them more relevant to contemporary society. Integrated programming can be used to market Extension because it is a recognized method that focuses on addressing the needs and issues of the community (DeBord, 2007). Effective issues-based programming will require that Extension

staff become more strategic, focused, and articulate (Hutchins, 1992). Clearly, Extension must become even more accountable and relevant to its clientele.

"Acceptance of issues programming hasn't been unanimous within the Cooperative Extension System" (Bahnl, 1991, ¶ 1). Extension specialists and agents often disagree because of the unclear relationship between issues programming or integrated programming, disciplinary foci, and departmental program structure. Issues programming suggests a focus on problems of public concern. County program professionals and specialists must understand the concepts behind new programming efforts and how the efforts will affect their subject areas before conflict can be minimized. Focusing on interdisciplinary teams to address needs is the goal of integrated programming, but it is not an easy task for an organization. Thus tools are being created to help Extension professionals understand integrated programming (Guion, in press). Because of the importance that each Extension County program professional plays in the development of relevant programming, it is imperative that integrated programming be clearly defined as it is becoming a common term among Extension professionals.

The History of Cooperative Extension

North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE) provides educational programming through North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T University (North Carolina Cooperative Extension, 2005). NCCE helps residents of North Carolina's100 counties and Qualla Boundary of the Cherokee Nation apply research-based knowledge for an improved quality of life through a partnership of county, state, and federal governments.

Extension is administered through the land grant universities, established in each state from the Morrill Act of 1862 (Comer, Campbell, Edwards, & Hillison, 2006). Later in 1890, the federal government, recognizing the importance of education, passed the second Morrill Act to increase federal support of the land-grant universities and establish universities for African Americans. The Smith Lever Act of 1914 established Cooperative Extension to bring educational resources to communities. Extension was organized to provide research and current developments in agriculture to the residents of each state.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has a Congressional mandate to utilize educational programming and outreaches to target individuals, including those with limited resources and educational opportunities (NC A&T University, 2008). Extension focuses on sustaining agriculture and forestry, protecting the environment, maintaining viable communities, developing responsible youth, and developing strong, healthy and safe families. Historically, Extension programming efforts were focused on changing individuals, although learner and community groups were also addressed (Hutchins, 1992). The intent of programming was directed towards improving individual decision-making and self-improvement. "Extension has a history of helping people in rural America use scientific, research-based information to solve practical problems and use available resources" (Fehlis, 1992, ¶1).

Extension professionals include campus specialists, who conduct research, train county professionals, and provide technical assistance, and county professionals, who work one-on-one with those in the communities (North Carolina Cooperative Extension, 2005). One aspect of the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES) is

to achieve, through interdisciplinary collaboration, significant improvements in economic, educational, environmental, and social conditions of individuals and their communities (CSREES, 2008).

The Concept of Programming in Extension

Adult education has progressed from an unintentional practice of individuals and organizations to a respected field of professional practice with the purpose of facilitating planned change in the behavior of individuals, groups and systems (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002). "As an educational system, adult education provides a conceptual framework within which myriad related organizations, programming processes, delivery systems, and evaluation techniques can be classified, analyzed, and studied" (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, p. 1). Programming must be in a state of change as adult educators broaden their foci to include the environmental issues and features of society which affect programming.

Programming encompasses the individual and collective efforts of the adult education organization, adult educators, and learners in planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and accounting for educational programs (Boone, 1985). Programming is proactive, always futuristic in its pursuits. Programming might be best defined as:

> A comprehensive, systematic, and proactive process encompassing the total planned, collaborative efforts of the adult education organization, the adult education in the roles of change agent and programmer, representatives of the learners, and the learners themselves in a purposive manner and designed to facilitate desirable changes in the behavior of learners and the environment or system in which they live. (Boone, 1985, p. 41)

Through various delivery modes, Cooperative Extension provides research-based educational programs and information regarding critical issues to individuals, families and communities (NC A&T University, 2008). Extension programming developed after the First Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant institutions in each state to educate citizens in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other practical professions. Extension programming is meant to help the public through educational means, and several delivery methods are used by professionals. Disciplinary or base programming has been the fundamental method used by Extension professionals, focusing on their specific subject matter area, rather than collaborating to work on multidisciplinary programming efforts (Bahnl, 1991).

It is important in programming to support diversity as well because it can strengthen a community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 2005). Diversity is not only represented by racial differences but also by economic, age, gender, and social stratifications. Any sustainable project or organization will identify assets in the community and connect with them to provide monetary and staffing needs. Creating an inventory of assets from the community as well as an asset map (which charts physical space, associations and institutions, individuals and local economy) is helpful when determining factors such as resources and locations for a program. An organization must link to the public, and this can be done through mapping in which targeted learner groups are identified (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002). Identifying social systems (e.g. geographic, sociological, political, and economic) is another approach that might be used to map any area. An organization can better design a program by learning to plan with social stratification in mind, such as income level, aspiration, education, etc.

Additionally, social differentiation, including sex, age, and ethnic background, is an important factor when planning a program because not all programming can effectively reach all differentiations. As a result of this diversity, there are considerations which must be determined in the planning stages of programming, such as preparation of activities so as to not exclude anyone due to race, gender, or differentiation. Planning programs incorporates understanding the diversities in the audience so that a variety of needs, learning styles and differences are noted.

A program is simply a system of interconnected inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes coupled with continuous feedback or evaluation (McNamara, 2007). Inputs are resources needed to run the program, while processes are the "how" in delivering services or meeting needs. Program planning for success involves several key components: structure, outcomes, goals, strategies, and objectives. Any program should be aligned with the mission and strategic goals of the organization. Additionally, it should involve board members and the audience as part of a team in the planning process. A nonprofit program is an integrated set of resources and activities focused toward providing a service to the audience. Outputs are units, such as the number of youth reached, and outcomes are impacts reported by the audience reached. The outcomes are the foci of a program, providing evidence that the services and efforts are effective and meaningful.

First and foremost, for any particular program the organization must define its audience, which will shape the planning process (McNamara, 2007). It is imperative in planning that one defines the needs that the program or services will meet and the expected outcomes to reach. To find these needs, it is necessary to complete a needs and/or asset

assessment in the planning process. A needs assessment is the first step in developing a relevant program, and these needs can guide programmatic decisions related to audience, content, format, and delivery (Queeney, 1995). The needs assessment will help define the issues and direct the organization to a particular program or service. "An attempt to incorporate too much into any program almost always results in superficial treatment of topics, diminished quality, or both, with the result that limited learning occurs" (Queeney, p. 201).

After initiating the planning, the educator uses the needs assessment to begin the action-oriented, service delivery steps (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002). An educator uses deductive and inductive analyses to translate needs into program design with a focus on developing effective teaching-learning strategies. Program design includes a written needs statement and hierarchy, a macro-objective and hierarchy, a macro-change strategy and hierarchy and a macro-outcome and hierarchy. The second phase of design is the creation of a plan of action, which is the means of implementing the program. For the plan of action, the educator combines needs, objectives, learning experiences, learner activities, resources, a time schedule, the expected outcome, indicators of the outcomes, and the sources of data to measure the indicators.

"But in either designing or analyzing an educational program, the mind does not proceed in any established sequence but plays back and forth over all aspects of the process" (Houle, 1996, p. 174). This statement holds true for program design and implementation. Several aspects are needed in program design and planning, which do not occur sequentially, but rather collaboratively fit together throughout the duration of the planning from start to

finish. For example, the needs assessment must be referenced throughout the design and implementation to maintain focus. The events and external situations surrounding the audience can present challenges, create more needs, or offer opportunities; therefore, it is necessary to research the environmental conditions affecting the target audience. Once a decision is made to develop a program based upon the needs assessment, the research of the educators, and the comparison to the organization's mission, then objectives must be identified. "The identification of the objectives to be sought in the learning experience is usually a major step in designing or analyzing it" (Houle, 1996, p. 179).

An objective is a statement of what the audience is expected to learn or accomplish after the instruction (Cranton, 1989). After clearly defining the objectives, all methods, materials, and evaluation can be directly referred back to them throughout the program. Objectives provide a standard by which the audience understands the expectations of the program, and thus the objectives guide instruction. "For the instructor, objectives become an invaluable aid in the planning process" (Cranton, p. 36). Objectives also communicate the nature of the instruction to any administrators, investors, and community members.

The next step is to develop a plan of action for the planned program (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002). The plan of action is the means to creating a program, and the implementation contains seven steps: studying the hierarchies, detailing the plan of action, locating resources, marketing, monitoring and conducting evaluations, providing reinforcement and using evaluation to redirect learning activities. Once the educator has studied the hierarchies then he or she can translate them into the program design. The plan of action entails six steps. First is selecting learning activities enabling the learner to experience and practice the

behavior in the objectives. Next, resources must be found to support the program and activities. A time schedule for the implementation must be specifically detailed. Fourth, the outcomes must be restated for each objective, and indicators of the outcomes defined. Lastly, evaluation tools and information sources validating achievements must be determined and developed.

"Certainly, evaluation 'closes the loop,' providing feedback to the organization and the target public, and thus logically follows teaching-learning activities" (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002, p. 193). The most basic element of programming is evaluation because it is continuous through each stage, following the activity. Evaluation can be stated as a holistic examination of the environment, client needs, procedures and outcomes using analysis (University of Texas at Austin, 2007). Evaluation begins with the planning of the program. Stakeholders must be identified in order to understand the level of accountability based upon evaluation which determines program outcomes and impacts. Any program evaluation must have a purpose, which can be categorized into three subdivisions: to gain insight, to change practice, and to measure effects (or impacts). Evaluation meant to gain insight is simplistic in form and focuses on the inputs of a program and how the program can be altered in the future to run more efficiently (Boone, Safrit, & Jones). For changing practice, evaluation will show how to improve the instructional activities. However, evaluation to measure effects or impacts focuses on the changes and lasting effects on the clientele of the program and the relationship of the instructional activities to the results. It is necessary to identify the use of the evaluation, thus understanding how the evaluation will be shaped to meet the need

(University of Texas at Austin, 2007). Once the evaluation has been administered, data are gathered, analyzed and reported to any stakeholders to demonstrate program credibility.

Evaluation is important for accountability, but for sustainable program life, evaluation must be representative of long-term impact (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002). In order to withstand the constant strain of resources and the tedious educational programming market, a program should create long-term impact in order to support the needs of a community and sustain the support of donors and stakeholders. The increase in superfluous information and programs supported by non-profit organizations demonstrates the necessity of creating an educational program with evidenced long-term effects. Therefore, Extension professionals must become educated in how to effectively create evaluation that captures long-term impacts in the lives of human beings. Defining long-term effects of programming on an individual demands a very focused and continuous form of evaluation over a long time span.

Accountability is necessary when dealing with stakeholders or funding sources for a program, and it is the process of reporting the effectiveness of a program (Boone, Safrit & Jones). The learners as well as policymakers who might have an interest in the program have a right to know about the efficiency of a program. An Extension educator must be accountable for his or her program, especially to funding sources. For any program funded by outside sources, an educator should be able to provide evidence of the quality of the program accomplishments and to report on relationships between the nature of the work and the quality of the accomplishments. In program planning, accountability means that an educator should be held responsible for program outcomes and impacts. Reporting outcomes

and impacts is important, but an educator should be capable of analyzing and assessing the program design and implementation and thus make recommendations to the organization.

In Brofenbrenner's (1979) method of programming, relationships between the environment and individuals are viewed as important factors in understanding society, and when understood with a programmatic theme, the relationships can shape planning by understanding potential environmental hazards and benefits. The first level of the model is the Individual, or core focus of program planning. The activities and goals of a program are focused on an individual and the changes that should occur in one's life as a result of any program. The succeeding level is the Microsystem, which defines the settings and groups in which a person lives and directly interacts. The levels of program focus move to the Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and finally Chronosystem. At each level the focus is broadened including more environmental factors to consider in program development. This model helped to shape what is currently used in Extension and other adult educational organizations.

Another model of Extension programming is the P.E.S.T model developed by Bryson (1995). According to Bryson, it is necessary to understand that program effectiveness happens by continuity in transitions, rather than revolution. There must be Political, Economical, Societal and Technological considerations when developing programs because there are factors within each level that affect the audience, needs, resources, and overall program design.

As programming has progressed throughout the years and different models have been used, the definition of Extension programming has been revised (DeBord, 2007). In

Extension, educational programming is a comprehensive, integrated set of educational change strategies, based on documented needs and designed to produce behavioral change among targeted learners resulting in social, economic, and environmental impacts. This definition provides Extension with a basis for the new method of integrated programming. The foundation of the integrated programming model is the conceptual programming model designed and explained by Boone, Safrit, and Jones (2002). Programming is defined as a macro-process and system, in which the educators and educational organization facilitate planned changes in behavior of the learners through structured programs. The concept of integrated programming builds upon this definition as it still involves planned change in behavior of learners with a focus on addressing broader societal needs with educators still acting as facilitators.

Purpose of the Research and Specific Research Objectives

The purpose of this exploratory, quantitative research study was to investigate perceptions of integrated programming among North Carolina Extension county program professionals. Specific research objectives included:

(1) to describe county Extension program professionals' selected personal demographics;

(2) to describe county Extension program professionals' selected professional characteristics/variables;

(3) to explore county Extension program professionals' perceptions of integrated programming; and

(4) to investigate possible relationships between county Extension program professionals' perceptions about integrated programming and selected personal demographic and professional characteristics and variables.

The study's independent variables and corresponding levels of measurement are represented in figure 1. The study's conceptual schema is found in Appendix A.

Study Variable	Level of Measurement
Independent Variables	
Gender	Nominal Dichotomous-Discrete
Age	Interval
Race/Ethnicity	Nominal Multichotomous-Discrete
District	Nominal Multichotomous-Discrete
Extension title	Nominal Multichotomous-Discrete
Tenure	Interval

Figure 1: Study variables and corresponding levels of measurement

Research Design Strengths and Limitations

The researcher recognizes the following strengths and weaknesses for the proposed research design:

Strengths

- One of the biggest strengths of the exploratory research of integrated program is the critical nature of the study. Because integrated programming is becoming the Extension programmatic model of choice, then it is necessary to understand the perceptions of county program professionals who are expected to implement the model. Understanding their perceptions and concerns could help strengthen or adjust the model.
- The research will serve as a resource for Extension administrators and specialists who supervise and support county Extension program professionals.

- The research is exploratory in nature, and the researcher does not intend to make inferences regarding study findings to any population other than the study participants. Therefore, the research is qualified by only being used for the representative population studied.
- The research is using a census so there is more reason to understand the entire population rather than to infer to the population from the results of a sample.
- The research instrument is based upon a widely-accepted set of criteria for evaluating integrated programming, suggesting the research instrument's face and content validity.
- The instrumentation and methodology were cost effective for the researcher and convenient for data collection. Electronic responses and reminders helped the researcher efficiently conduct the study.
- Instrumentation followed guidelines suggested by contemporary applied researchers in social sciences and education.
- The research instrument's face and content validities were established by a panel of state experts in the areas of integrated programming design.
- The research instrument's construct validity and reliability was established through a pilot test of participants within the target population for the study research which leaves less room for confusion and error in the data collection.
- Data collection followed established procedures in the social sciences and education.
- The researcher calculated appropriate statistics to satisfy the research objectives.

Limitations

- A potential weakness of this particular study of integrated programming within North Carolina Cooperative Extension is that administrators may be unwilling to accept the study findings and perceptions shared by county Extension program professionals.
- The research may be used only for knowledge and never used to help change and strengthen the programming model.
- Respondents may fear answering the questionnaire honestly out of concern for responses negatively affecting their work environment. Because the new programmatic model was mandated throughout the state, respondents may also feel that their opinions and perceptions are not of value to the administrators; thus they might not have participated or answered without persuasion.
- There are political implications to support the new programmatic model as well as to dictate funding sources; therefore, there is a glitch in the research because any political implications could skew the data collection as respondents might feel pressured to respond in a certain manner.
- The research is exploratory in nature, with no prior quantitative or qualitative research found in the literature upon which to base the study's methodology.
- The researcher assumes that study participants will answer the questionnaire items truthfully and representative of their true perceptions and opinions.
- Mixed methods were not used in this study. If they had been used by the researcher, it would have provided stronger research for creating the web based questionnaire. There is no prior qualitative research conducted on this topic; however, a focus group

would have provided stronger themes to help structure the questionnaire and support any quantitative findings.

- Because there was no previously created e-mail database for all county Extension program professionals, it was possible to not have a true census of the research population.
- Because the questionnaire was web based and all correspondence was via e-mail, less participation may have occurred because respondents might have forgotten to complete the survey within the appropriate time frame.
- There is a threat to external validity, due to people retiring in Extension during the course of the study because of an early retirement incentive, plan or option being offered through the state.
- Some participants within the population may be out on leave during the assigned data collection time frame thus decreasing the number of respondents.
- Participants may delete the e-mail request due to a lack of interest or pressing time restraints due to a heavy workload. Additionally, due to the increased involvement in county and state fairs during the data collection time frame, fewer participants may have responded.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The study of integrated programming as it relates to North Carolina Cooperative Extension professionals warranted a review of literature regarding issue based, collaborative, integrated and Extension programming. In examining programming, the focus was upon the history, uses and development of each methodology. The concepts are interrelated, and thus the meanings of each will be shown through the utilization of these methods in both child, adolescent, and adult education.

History/Development of Cooperative Extension

Congress created the Extension system to address mainly rural agricultural issues (CSREES, 2008). The Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant universities to educate citizens, and through the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, Extension became the link to provide educational programming to the public in communities throughout the United States. North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE) provides educational programming through North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T University (North Carolina Cooperative Extension, 2005). NCCE helps residents of North Carolina's100 counties and Qualla Boundary of the Cherokee Nation apply research-based knowledge for an improved quality of life through a partnership of county, state, and federal governments.

Extension is administered through the land grant universities, established in each state from the Morrill Act of 1862 (Comer, Campbell, Edwards, & Hillison, 2006). Later in 1890, the federal government, recognizing the importance of education, passed the second Morrill

Act to increase federal support of the land-grant universities and establish universities for African Americans. Extension was organized to provide research and current developments in agriculture to the residents of each state.

Through various delivery modes, Cooperative Extension provides research-based educational programs and information regarding critical issues to individuals, families and communities (NC A&T University, 2008). Extension programming developed after the First Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant institutions in each state to educate citizens in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other practical professions. Extension programming is meant to help the public through educational means and several delivery methods are used by professionals. Disciplinary or base programming has been the fundamental method used by Extension professionals, focusing on their specific subject matter area, rather than collaborating to work on multidisciplinary programming efforts (Bahnl, 1991).

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has a Congressional mandate to utilize educational programming and outreaches to target individuals without resources and educational opportunities (NC A&T University, 2008). Extension focuses on sustaining agriculture and forestry, protecting the environment, maintaining viable communities, developing responsible youth, and developing strong, healthy and safe families. Historically, Extension programming efforts were focused on changing individuals, although learner and community groups were also addressed (Hutchins, 1992). "The historical function of Extension is to bring research-based knowledge in a useable form to groups, families, and individuals in local communities" (Griner Hill & Parker, 2005, ¶1). The intent of

programming was directed towards improving individual decision-making and self-improvement. "Extension has a history of helping people in rural America use scientific, research-based information to solve practical problems and use available resources" (Fehlis, 1992, ¶1).

Extension professionals include campus specialists who conduct research, train county professionals, and provide technical assistance, and county professionals who work one-on-one with those in the communities (North Carolina Cooperative Extension, 2005). One aspect of the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES) is to achieve, through interdisciplinary collaboration, significant improvements in economic, educational, environmental, and social conditions of individuals and their communities (CSREES, 2008). Due to changing America, Extension has evolved to offer farmers new innovative ways to utilize farmland, homeowners ways to maintain their homes, and youth ways to build leadership skills for the future. The expertise of Extension professionals helps meet the public needs at the local level.

Definitions of Programming

Programming is defined by many various authors and educators; one of the earliest Tyler (1949) described a programmatic procedure for education. His procedure involved four main questions related to curriculum and instruction. First, the educational purpose of any organization must be clearly defined through objectives of what must be attained. Secondly, learning experiences are necessary to attain the selected objectives; therefore, any organization must make an effort to create learning experiences which will be conducive to the learners' educational gain. Thirdly, Tyler emphasized that in addition to choosing the

correct learning experiences, an organization must arrange these said experiences in a manner which will enhance learning. Lastly, in programming, evaluation is pertinent towards determining the gain and effectiveness of the learning experiences. In his work, Tyler did not include formal steps to programming, but rather provided a model to spark the educator to consider the learners, life, and subject-matter specialists as a partnership in educational development.

According to Havighurst and Orr (1956), "the goal of adult education is to help people live better" (p.1). People are expected to meet certain social expectations and their ability to meet these demonstrates their quality of life according to standards set by the community in which one lives. "Adult educators must first focus upon the problem of changing general attitudes of adults toward themselves as learners and toward education which they regard as a child's work only" (Havighurst & Orr, p.61). Truly effective educational programming helps individuals understand the importance of their role as a learner. Programming according to the authors in this essay involves clarifying to the learners their performance level of basic developmental tasks mandated by society and then utilizing this knowledge to collaborate with adult associations within a community to teach the learner.

Lippett, Watson, and Westley (1958) presented an unstructured model for planned change in *Dynamics of Planned Change*. The goal of their work was to present a definition of a general process of change. Their model consisted of five main stages: (1) awareness of the need for change, (2) establishing the "change relationship," (3) working toward a change,

(4) stabilization of a change, and (5) the change agent establishing a terminal relationship with the clientele.

Another model for programming which has contributed to the models currently used in Extension is the programming model described in *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1970). Knowles's concept relies on the theory that adults move towards self-direction and use their experiences as a learning resource. Knowles described how adults also desire to immediately apply learned knowledge and are ready to learn so as to successfully complete socio-economic tasks. The purpose for his programmatic model is that of unity.

Programming could be considered a comprehensive synthesis of theory, analysis, and practice according to Boyle (1981). In his work, 15 concepts are presented as the foundation of the program development process. Similar to the foundation of Boone (1985), Boyle groups the concepts into the planning stage, design and implementation stage, and evaluation stage. There is no one theoretical model defined by Boyle; however, educational programming involves a planned change. He claimed that planned change is necessary to effective social and economic progress, and if properly planned and implemented, educational programming can significantly contribute to planned change. Educational changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills help individuals achieve economic, environmental and social change. This principle of knowledge, attitude, and skill change is supported and utilized within the models for programming suggested by Boone (1985) and Boone, Safrit and Jones (2002).

Programming encompasses the individual and collective efforts of the adult education organization, adult educators, and learners in planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and accounting for the educational programs (Boone, 1985). Programming is proactive, always futuristic in its pursuits. Programming might be best defined as:

> A comprehensive, systematic, and proactive process encompassing the total planned, collaborative efforts of the adult education organization, the adult education in the roles of change agent and programmer, representatives of the learners, and the learners themselves in a purposive manner and designed to facilitate desirable changes in the behavior of learners and the environment or system in which they live. (Boone, 1985, p. 41)

Adult education has progressed from an unintentional practice of individuals and organizations to a respected field of professional practice with the purpose of facilitating planned change in the behavior of individuals, groups and systems (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002). "As an educational system, adult education provides a conceptual framework within which myriad related organizations, programming processes, delivery systems, and evaluation techniques can be classified, analyzed, and studied" (Boone, Safrit & Jones, p. 1). Programming must be in a state of change as adult educators broaden their foci to include the environmental issues and features of society which affect programming.

It is important in programming to support diversity as well because it can strengthen a community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 2005). Diversity is not only represented by racial differences but also by economic, age, gender, and social stratifications. Any sustainable project or organization will identify assets in the community and connect with them to

provide monetary and staffing needs. Creating an inventory of assets from the community as well as an asset map (which charts physical space, associations and institutions, individuals and local economy) could prove helpful when determining factors such as resources and locations for a program. An organization must link to the public, and this can be done through mapping, in which targeted learner groups are identified (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002). Social systems (e.g., geographic, sociological, political, and economic) are some ways to map any area. An organization can better design a program by learning to plan with social stratification in mind, such as income level, aspiration, education, etc. Additionally, social differentiation, including sex, age, and ethnic background, is an important factor when planning a program because not all programming can effectively reach all differentiations. As a result of this diversity, there are considerations which must be determined in the planning stages of programming.

A program is simply a system of interconnected inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes coupled with continuous feedback or evaluation (McNamara, 2007). Inputs are resources needed to run the program, while processes are the "how" in delivering services or meeting needs. Program planning for success involves several key components: structure, outcomes, goals, strategies, and objectives. Any program should be aligned with the mission and strategic goals of the organization. Additionally, it should involve board members and the audience as part of a team in the planning process. A nonprofit program is an integrated set of resources and activities focused toward providing a service to the audience. Outputs are units, such as the number of youth reached, and outcomes are impacts reported by the

audience reached. The outcomes are the foci of a program, providing "proof" that the services and efforts are effective and meaningful.

The Concept of Extension Programming

There are barriers that exist in Extension programming (Griner Hill & Parker, 2005). Relatively little collaboration among departments, local businesses, legislators and state and federal agencies exists within Extension programming. However, Griner Hill and Parker reported that Extension professionals believe in the value of collaboration. Additionally, they feel it will enhance their work and effectiveness in programming. Extension programming has kept much of its traditional programming, yet it must adapt to accommodate for more effective programming. "We need to overcome the tendency to dichotomize traditional and prevention programs in Extension" (Griner Hill & Parker, ¶36). Best practice prevention programming offers a chance to create integrated Extension projects, a clear goal of the land grant mission.

"Through various delivery modes, the North Carolina A&T Cooperative Extension Program provides research-based educational programs and information regarding critical issues to individuals, families and communities" (NC Cooperative Extension, 2008, ¶1). Extension programming developed after the First Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant institutions in each state to educate citizens in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other practical professions. Extension programming is meant to help the public through educational means, and several delivery methods are used by professionals. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension has a Congressional mandate to develop educational programming which targets individuals without the financial resources and educational

background enjoyed by mainstream Americans. Extension outreaches focus on sustaining agriculture and forestry, protecting the environment, maintaining viable communities, developing responsible youth, and developing strong, healthy and safe families. Extension professionals include specialists on campus, who train and provide technical assistance, and county paraprofessionals, who work one-on-one with those in the communities.

Major Components of Extension Programming

Planning is the first piece of the conceptual model of adult education (Boone, 1985; Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002):

> Planning is a deliberate, rational, continuing sequence of activities through which the adult educator acquires a thorough understanding of and commitment to the organization's functions, structure, and processes and becomes knowledgeable about and committed to a tested conceptual framework for programming, continuous organizational renewal, and linkage of the organization to its publics. (Boone, 1985, p. 64)

Program planning for success involves several key components: structure, outcomes, goals, strategies, and objectives (McNamara, 2007). Any program should be aligned with the mission and strategic goals of the organization. As well, it should involve board members and the audience as part of a team in the planning process. A nonprofit program is an integrated set of resources and activities focused toward providing a service to the audience. A program is simply a system of interconnected inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes coupled with continuous feedback or evaluation. Inputs are resources needed to run the program, while processes are the "how" in delivering services or meeting needs. Outputs are

units, such as the number of youth reached, and outcomes are impacts reported by the audience reached. The outcomes are the foci of a program, providing "proof" that the services and efforts are effective and meaningful. First, for any particular program the organization must define its audience, which will shape the planning process. It is imperative in planning that one defines the needs that the program or services will meet and the expected outcomes to reach. To find these needs, it is necessary to complete a needs and or asset assessment in the strategic plan (McNamara, 2007). The needs assessment will help define the issues and direct the organization to a particular program or service.

A needs assessment is the first step in developing a relevant program, and these needs can guide programmatic decisions related to audience, content, format, and delivery (Queeney, 1995). Flexibility is necessary when incorporating needs assessment findings into the programmatic design. The needs assessments should be planned and reviewed in order to match data to strengths, resources, and mission, almost acting as a filter allowing only those needs which can be met through proper programming within an organization. In order to use the needs assessment, data must be compiled and the analysis of this data can take the form of a summary or a statistical compilation.

However, compilation of data is futile without understanding its interpretation (Queeney). An organization must take the data and format it into an identifiable unit, and it could be stratified into subgroups according to demographics. The assessment data will pinpoint a direction in which knowledge, skill or performance ability is lacking, thus forming a description of educational needs of the audience. Additionally, in determining data, educators will review the learning styles and limitations of the targeted audience to decide

the feasibility of educational programming to address the needs and to assign activities which would appropriately meet the need. Any successful needs assessment should have a narrow focus. "An attempt to incorporate too much into any program almost always results in superficial treatment of topics, diminished quality, or both, with the result that limited learning occurs" (Queeney, 1995, p. 201).

An organization must link to the public, and this can be done through mapping, in which learner groups are identified (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002). Social systems (e.g., geographic, sociological, political, and economic) are some ways to map any area. An organization can better design a program by learning to plan within social stratification in mind, such as income level, aspiration, education, etc. Additionally, social differentiation, including sex, age, and ethnic background, is an important factor when planning a program because not all programming can effectively reach all differentiations. As a result of this diversity, there are considerations which must be determined in the planning stages of programming. After initiating the planning, the educator uses the needs assessment to begin the action-oriented, service delivery steps. An educator uses deductive and inductive analysis to translate needs into program design with a focus on developing effective teaching-learning strategies. Program design includes a written needs statement and hierarchy, a macro-objective and hierarchy, a macro-change strategy and hierarchy and a macro-outcome and hierarchy.

"But in either designing or analyzing an educational program, the mind does not proceed in any established sequence but plays back and forth over all aspects of the process" (Houle, 1996, p. 174). This statement holds true for program design and implementation.

Several aspects are needed in program design and planning, which do not occur sequentially, but rather collaboratively fit together throughout the duration of the planning from start to finish. For example, the needs assessment must be referenced throughout the design and implementation to maintain focus. The events and external situations surrounding the audience can present challenges, create more needs, or offer opportunities; therefore, it is necessary to research the environmental conditions, affecting the target audience. Once a decision is made to develop a program based upon the needs assessment, the research of the educators, and the comparison to the organization's mission, then objectives must be identified. "The identification of the objectives to be sought in the learning experience is usually a major step in designing or analyzing it" (Houle, 1996, p. 179).

An objective is a statement of what the audience is expected to learn or accomplish after the instruction (Cranton, 1989). After clearly defining the objectives, methods, materials, and evaluation can be directly referred back to them throughout the program. Objectives provide a standard by which the audience understands the expectations of the program, and thus the objectives guide instruction. "For the instructor, objectives become an invaluable aid in the planning process" (Cranton, p. 36). Objectives also communicate the nature of the instruction to any administrators, investors, and community members.

The learning types and the experiences are outlined in a change strategies hierarchy directly correlated to the objectives hierarchy:

> The outcome sought is the selection of an appropriate learning experience for each learner objective in the objectives hierarchy, and the arrangement of these learning

> experiences into a change strategies hierarchy that responds and parallels the objectives hierarchy. (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002, p. 169)

The learner activity contributes to learning by utilizing the sensory organs and selecting the proper learning experiences. "A strategy is a carefully designed plan or scheme of learning experiences and accompanying learner activities designed to achieve the macro-objective and its subordinate, ascending/descending-level learner objectives" (Boone, Safrit & Jones, p. 169). The way the strategies are ordered reinforces learning and builds learning capacity. Any learner must be allowed to experience and practice new behaviors. Continuity, sequence, and integration are important factors in designing change strategies to increase the change of an adoption of a change.

Taking all three hierarchies, the next step is to develop a plan of action for the planned program (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002). The plan of action is the means to creating a program, and the implementation contains seven steps: studying the hierarchies, detailing the plan of action, locating resources, marketing, monitoring and conducting evaluations, providing reinforcement and using evaluation to redirect learning activities. Once the educator has studied the hierarchies then he or she can translate them into the program design. The plan of action entails six steps. First is selecting learning activities enabling the learner to experience and practice the behavior in the objectives. Next, resources must be found to support the program and activities. A time schedule for the implementation must be specifically detailed. Fourth, the outcomes must be restated for each objective, and indicators of the outcomes defined. Lastly, evaluation tools and information sources for proof of the achievements must be determined and developed.

"Certainly, evaluation 'closes the loop,' providing feedback to the organization and the target public, and thus logically follows teaching-learning activities" (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002, p. 193). The most basic element of programming is evaluation because it is continuous through each stage, following the activity. Evaluation can be challenging due to many factors, including time (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002). Evaluation must be applicable and agreeable to the programming, thus the educator must choose the proper form of evaluation to collect the data needed for accountability. Educational programs are structured to create both micro-outcomes and long-term impacts in the learners and learner systems. Many stakeholders and audiences demand evidence of long-term impacts in early stages, thus evaluation can be frustrating and overwhelming if not administered properly. The pressure of immature data collection can cause improper use of input data, such as participant numbers, activity numbers, and volunteer numbers. Many evaluators simply turn to "best guesses" supported by subjective data to meet accountability demands.

Truly, evaluation and accountability are formed from determining, measuring, and assessing both program micro-outcomes, impacts, inputs; determining cost effectiveness; and using evaluation findings for program revisions and accountability (Boone, Safrit & Jones, 2002). For program accountability, impact must be a priority in evaluation. Impact refers to the ultimate, long-term changes resulting from a program on a targeted audience. Other micro-outcomes are changes resulting from a program, such as knowledge, skill, aspiration and behavioral changes.

Accountability is necessary when dealing with stakeholders or funding sources for a program, and it is a process of reporting the effectiveness of a program (Boone, Safrit &

Jones). The learners as well as policymakers who might have an interest in the program hold a right to know about the efficiency of a program. An educator must be able to answer for his or her program, especially to funding sources. For any program funded by outside sources, an educator should be able to provide evidence of the quality of the program accomplishments and to report on relationships between the nature of the work and the quality of the accomplishments. In program planning, accountability means that an educator should be held responsible for program outcomes and impacts. Reporting outcomes and impacts is important, but an educator should be capable of analyzing and assessing the program design and implementation and thus make recommendations to the organization.

Evaluation can be stated as a holistic examination of the environment, client needs, procedures and outcomes using analysis (University of Texas at Austin, 2007). Evaluation begins with the planning of the program. Stakeholders must be identified in order to understand the level of accountability based upon evaluation which determines program outcomes and impacts. Any program evaluation must have a purpose, which can be categorized into three subdivisions: to gain insight, to change practice, and to measure effects (or impacts). Evaluation meant to gain insight is simplistic in form and focuses on the inputs of a program and how the program can be altered in the future to run more efficiently. For changing practice, evaluation will show how to improve the instructional activities. However, evaluation to measure effects or impacts focuses on the changes and lasting effects on the clientele of the program and the relationship of the instructional activities to the results. It is necessary to identify the use of the evaluation, thus understanding how the evaluation will be shaped to meet the need. Once the evaluation has been given, data are

gathered, analyzed and reported to any stakeholders' audience to demonstrate program credibility.

"In recent years program evaluators have taken on an expanded role because their experience can be of value in every stage of the development of the program" (Beswick, 1990, ¶ 2). Three categories of evaluation are summative, formative, and ex post facto. Summative evaluation is used when demonstration and documentation of a program is needed to show its effectiveness for use of comparison with other programs. Formative evaluation is for internal use in order to improve a program for use again. For example, formative evaluation might produce data showing that the program would be better suited at another location or with more seating. Finally, ex post facto evaluation occurs over time to study whether a program is achieving the proposed goals and outcomes. Ex post facto can utilize both longitudinal and cross-sectional data to document the success or failure of a program to achieve its goals.

It is beneficial to implement all three categories to grasp a better understanding of a new program especially (Beswick, 1990). However, ex post facto evaluation can help with accountability by consistently studying the effects of the program over a period of time. In evaluation it is important to note that reliability and validity are important factors in accountability. The data collected must be reliable and valid based upon the instruments and strategies used. Evaluation must be used from start to finish in a program. "Thus, the use of an evaluator as program partner is effective at every stage of program development for integrating differing levels of understanding and shifts in accountability" (Beswick, ¶ 16).

Educational Programming

Brofenbrenner (1979) developed a model of programming which centers on the individual and bases programming on the relationships between that individual and the environment and surrounding systems. Extension programming was created using this model as a foundation. Additionally, the model helped to describe the significance of an individual's interaction with his or her surroundings as it relates to the programmatic design needed to affect behavioral change.

Boone (1985) took program models and compiled a structure of programming and laid the framework for essential interrelated subprocesses: planning, design and implementation, and evaluation and accountability. "Programming is a proactive process in that it is always futuristic in its thrust" (Boone, p.41). Programming is geared towards promoting behavioral change. Boone's work described a theoretical approach to programming which involved developing a conceptual model.

Another model of Extension programming is the P.E.S.T model developed by Bryson (1995). According to Bryson, it is necessary to understand that program effectiveness happens by continuity in transitions, rather than revolution. There must be political, economical, societal and technological considerations when developing programs because there are factors within each level that affects the audience, needs, resources, and overall program design.

Additionally, Boone, Safrit and Jones (2002) developed a structure for programming, which is used in all disciplines of Extension. It is based around a model of planning, design, implementation, evaluation, and accountability. This model is currently still utilized in

Extension as the base programmatic methodology. However, as needs have advanced and societal issues have become more pressing, Extension has been forced to modify its methods and adapt to reach a broader audience. The authors expanded on Boone's (1985) conceptual model for programming, and they reviewed recent models of programming, drawing upon similarities and contradictions among them. Additionally, the work shows the transition in educational programming from learners as receivers of programming to collaborators in their own educational experience. Like Boone's work, the authors dissected the conceptual model and described each of the subprocesses, sharing assumptions and concepts.

The model developed by Boone, Safrit, and Jones (2002) is an updated version of that developed by Boone (1985). Boone developed a model for programming for adult education, and he described the necessity of understanding inputs and outputs. The model helps any adult educator understand the needs of the learners and the process needed to develop a program to meet those needs.

Concept of Integrated Programming:

Issues-based programming

In the 1980s, Extension began focusing on a new programming effort, issues programming, which depended on interdisciplinary teams. Dalgaard, Brazzel, Liles, Sanderson, and Taylor-Powell (1988) discussed the importance of interdisciplinary teams as a way of reaching a more diverse clientele with stronger programming efforts, utilizing the strengths of many agents and specialists. These teams identified needs, set goals, planned, designed and implemented programs. Issues programming involved a broad group of agents

and specialists and crossed discipline areas in order to provide a comprehensive program to meet a need of the audience.

Deshler (1989) focused on the future of Extension as offering an opportunity for issues programming. Issues programming could be conducted in conjunction with impact and risk assessments, which are techniques that help anticipate potential hazards or consequences with specific plans or situations. Conducting risk assessments could lead educators to a better understanding of complex effects of programming and a basis for stronger program planning, considering approaches best for the public.

"The Cooperative Extension System is being challenged to adapt to a changing world-a complex world in which yesterday's answers and tools don't seem to solve today's problems" (Taylor-Powell & Richardson, 1990, ¶1). According to Taylor-Powell and Richardson, issues programming should be the proposed programming approach for the 21st Century. Time must be spent on identifying issues, devising interdisciplinary teams, and organizing educational resources. These aspects are similarly found in the new integrated programming model proposed by Guion (in press). Taylor-Powell and Richardson relayed the results from a survey conducted in Texas documenting the changes perceived by Extension professionals which accompany issues-based programming. As a result of the survey, it was discovered that the majority of staff members associated issues programming grassroots needs assessment and building programs on identified needs. Team programming and collaboration were changes deemed necessary by Extension staff in order to promote issues programming. Many respondents claimed to have problems in carrying out programming based on issues, showing a need for educational resources on how to conduct

programming. The study showed the difficulties of transitioning in programmatic styles; therefore there was a need for support. However, issues programming had definite benefits for staff especially through increased collaborations.

"The aim of issues programming was perceived as valuable to society and thus beneficial to CES" (Bahnl, 1991, ¶3). Bahnl's work defined the conflict between issues-based and disciplinary programming. The conflict initially began with the error of administration in properly introducing the new methods. It was expected to be valued by all Extension professionals (Bahnl, 1991). However, the incentives were not clearly stated at the beginning, thus the leadership must administer with sensitivity to the needs and incentives of educators. Issues programming became Extension's response to the decline of relevant programming and funding in the organization. The shift of programming included larger concern of public problems. Disciplinary programming was originally the focus of Extension, thus when agents and specialists were informed of a change to issues programming, there were serious reservations. However, issues programming did not discredit the importance of subject matter areas of responsibility, but rather placed an additional importance on societal issues.

However, there were some, such as Skelton (1991), who believe that issues-based programming should not be "all-or-nothing" in Extension programmatic efforts. "The adoption of issues-based programming can be thought of as a 'new label, new bottle, but old wine' " (Skelton, ¶1). Extension programming was using new terminology and processes for selecting issues but the results of programming were still the same. Needs were being met by programmatic efforts because problems or needs were identified. As discipline areas have

expanded, new planning procedures and programming must be broadened. Skelton discussed that a potential concern within issues-based programming is interdisciplinary divisiveness, which could result from an unclear understanding of the concept of issues-based programming. Additionally, there was the potential for discipline competition rather than necessary collaboration. "It provides a definite challenge to the state Extension Services and the national Extension staff to reinforce and promote the value and worth of the disciplines as the foundation of base programs as well as the issues and initiatives" (Skelton, 1991, ¶5).

Programming with the use of task forces is one way Extension programming is changing its efforts (Fehlis, 1992). Fehlis described the task force methodology of implementing programming, including information on the importance of developing a task force as it relates to solving societal concerns. Texas Extension developed a task force to study Extension programming effectiveness. The task force determined through the study that accountability was an important aspect of programming. Subsequently, program success resulted from a commitment to issues-based programming as well as teamwork.

Hutchins (1992) encouraged discussion about the difference between educating the individual or the collective and the importance of evaluating county clustering. Hutchins defined issues and explained the need for enhanced programming in order to meet the needs of a changing society. He also indentified the importance of county clustering as he focused on the efforts made by Minnesota Extension. It is evident that programming in Extension has changed from traditional to issues-based programming as the needs of society have changed. Extension's focus on issues-based programming since the 1990s forced agents and specialists to re-examine programming approaches and consider further advancement such as integrated

programming to reach the audiences. The expert-to-individual model, which was initially used as the primary educational approach, is no longer the most efficient method of reaching new clientele.

Lamm (1992) focused on meeting urban needs through issues-based programming. He discussed how issues programming defined barriers about urban issues as a separate entity from rural issues. Many issues affected people in both urban and rural communities, such as water quality and food safety for example. Therefore, issues programming extended beyond regional barriers. Cooperative Extension could use programming efforts to meet issue needs once professionals understand that issues cross geographic and status lines.

Rockwell, Furgason, Jacobson, Schmidt, and Tooker (1993) discussed the transfer of single to multicounty programming units. The authors described four assessments conducted in five pilot sites in Nebraska to determine citizen concerns and the programming change of multicounty units. The authors detailed reactions to reorganization, and recommendations for future approaches. Teamwork and communication were noted as important factors of creating positive programmatic change. Similar in nature to issues programming, it was a focus on utilizing agents to conduct programs based upon the issues in a cluster of counties. An agent would develop programs and then disseminate the information to more than one county, collaborating with county agents without the expertise to address the societal need. This approach was a step toward integrated programming because both recognized the focus on addressing societal needs and the inability of each agent to have the skill set needed to address those needs alone.

"In Extension, issues programming is distinguished from disciplinary (base) programming by a focus on broad and complex societal issues, and targeting of nontraditional audiences and interdisciplinary faculty involvement" (Baker & Verma, 1993, ¶1). Baker and Verma evaluated issues programming by surveying Extension Services in 1991 to determine the effectiveness of the new methods. Issues based programming was a change from traditional Extension efforts introduced in 1987 with supporters and adversaries. They found through the study that agents resisted changes to conduct issues programming, but agents were impressed with the need for and value of teamwork. Agents using issues programming methods were engaging in expanded roles of coordination, education and facilitation. Implications were offered for new programmatic efforts in Extension although it was determined that agents were not comfortable with implementing the new changes. In order to properly utilize new programmatic methods, the study encouraged new training and collaboration with agents and specialists. Also, it was advised that the organization provide flexibility as new changes are being adapted by Extension professionals. Issues programming increased collaboration and teamwork among agents in program development.

Issues-based programming (I.B.P.) described by Yang, Fetsch, Jenson, and Weigel (1995), was useful for Extension programming in order to serve clientele. IBP embodied identifiable issues which became the primary focus of the programming. "Cooperative Extension is a multi-disciplinary profession"(Yang, Fetsch, Jenson, & Weigel, ¶9). Issues that are of concern to the Extension clientele typically encompass several subject matters thus why integrated or multidisciplinary programming is effective. Issues programming involved finding constituencies who are invested in the concerns and then creating a

collaborative plan to meet those concerns. These authors provided options to overcome resistance to issues-based programming. As a result, they provided Extension professionals with 10 steps to develop, validate, and cluster issues into programmable units. First, an organization must identify those who have an investment in the results of programming. Next, the authors suggested the development of an issues task force with representatives from all constituencies. Each member should collect all statements of issues from the audience which they represent. The task force would take the statements collate them and construct a survey form with a Likert scale for all statements. Then by obtaining a random sample of the population, they would apply the research instrument and utilize a systemized return rate. The data then must be analyzed and verified to ultimately reach the summation of critical issues to address.

Betts, Firth, Watters, and Shepherd (1996) used their work to describe the importance of working across program areas on issues programming. In Arizona Extension, professionals are encouraged to work across program areas lines in order to assure the best education for limited resource audiences. County agents were surveyed to determine the competencies needed to work with at-risk audiences. As a result, the authors found that integrating programming and audiences were among competencies needed by Extension professionals. As a result of the study, Extension has begun integrated programming among areas. Throughout the study the authors expressed the importance of gaining the necessary competencies needed to produce the best programming for clientele. Integrated programming and multi-disciplinary work created a stronger working environment. “As staff

work together, toward the common goal of completing this process, the working relationships and communication improve" (Betts, Firth, Watters, & Shepherd, ¶12).

Public issues educational programming has been a role of Cooperative Extension for many years according to Patton and Blaine (2001). However, controversy is more commonly seen as a response to public issues programming. Therefore, the authors offered suggestions to Extension agents on how to avoid controversy while understanding and properly implementing programming on public issues. Public Issues Education (PIE) became a stronger Extension focus in 1992 with the position statement set by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP). Public issues were representative of community concerns with a strong set of underlying problems. As a result the authors demonstrated the need for conducting a public issues an analysis to determine any underlying problems and identify potential solutions. The authors offered the need for Extension professionals to assume the role of process expert in order to effectively tackle issues programming.

Griner Hill and Parker (2005) conducted a survey of Family Living and 4-H professionals in Washington state for the purpose of defining attitudes towards prevention programming. Prevention programming was grounded in developmental theory and empirical research. Prevention programming addressed specific community needs or issues very similar to what is known as issues based programming. Through the survey conducted, the authors discovered that professionals felt there was a need for prevention programming, without disregarding the importance of traditional Extension programming. Respondents reported a need for more collaboration and a high level of collaboration already being conducted.

Donnellan and Montgomery (2005) looked at issues programming from a view of whether it was the necessary programmatic move for Extension as an organization. Their work focuses on the importance of accountability in programming, despite the apparent challenge that Extension professionals had faced with staying accountable to stakeholders and clientele. Extension professionals must become communicators of programmatic efforts in order to increase accountability. In this work, the authors discussed how important issues programming can become if communicators were built within multidisciplinary teams. Issues programming however is a methodology that Extension administrators must support, and planning teams should create measurable goals in order to provide program accountability.

Klemme, Hausafus, and Shirer (2005) discussed the response of Extension to increased programming for at-risk audiences, which involved specific issues based programming. The authors highlighted that since its creation Extension programming efforts have been concentrated towards agriculture-related issues. Throughout the years, Extension specialists were created to develop programs specifically around certain disciplines or issues in the community. As rural America decreases in size, there is a need for changing program foci to accommodate meeting the needs of the new audiences. The Futures Task Force to the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy in 1987 conducted a study recommending that Extension programming move towards issues-based and cross-disciplinary. This was an early attempt to what is now integrated programming.

Singletary, Smith, Hill, Daniels, Smutko, Ayres, and Haaland (2007) reported a needs assessment nationally involving Extension professionals to determine their skill needs in

order to properly conduct Public Issues Education (P.I.E.). This issues education could be compared to issues programming because it was education focused on informing citizens to improve group decisions about complex issues. The assessment showed that agents rate the need for developing P.I.E. skills as a high priority. Agents recognized that targeting issues through programming was a want of society, thus they needed to be prepared properly to address the concerns. Therefore, professional development was suggested as a way to help assist agents in developing specified skills and knowledge centered on key issues.

Integrated programming

"Issues, by definition, are public concerns" (Hutchins, 1992, ¶3). Hutchins suggested that to find solutions to these public concerns, collective change was needed. Integrated issues based programming developed from the idea of issues programming, which involved more strategic, focused, articulate and potentially political educators. Educators working to bring about collective change in an audience should be publicly accountable for their actions, which was a piece involved in issues-based programming.

Duncan and Foster (1996) addressed the educational programming done by Extension to reach the aging community. They recognized the importance of utilizing interdisciplinary collaboration as a means to developing productive programming for those over the age of 65. As a result of their work, one conclusion reached was as it appeared "lowering interdisciplinary and organizational barriers and working collaboratively would be a more effective way to meet the needs of our growing aged population" (Duncan & Foster, ¶2). Their article described what Alabama Cooperative Extension did to promote interdisciplinary programming. A team was developed to study the needs of the seniors and documented the

accomplishments of interdisciplinary collaboration. "Interdisciplinary collaboration can enable cooperating agencies and communities to be more responsive and proactive to the needs of that population" (Duncan & Foster, 1996, ¶14).

Collaborative programming is a term used in other adult education organizations rather than Extension, particularly in the public school system. According to Griffin and Pugach (2007), collaborative teacher education is the foundation for stronger educational success in the adult learner. Collaboration is possible, yet it takes work. It is complex, but with the willingness to contribute there can be an increase in effectiveness in education. There must be supportive leadership to enable strong collaboration. As well, collaboration is impossible without consistent and clear communication among all parties. Evaluation is a key component to program development and collaborative efforts to determine its success or shortcomings. "Collaboration forces a confrontation with new or alternative conceptions of teaching and learning" (Griffin & Pugach, p.8). It is necessary that collaborators understand that changes and new ideas must be accepted and assessed in order to strengthen programming. According to the authors, the driving force of collaborative efforts for teachers should be the pressing needs of youth. This could be translated to the needs of clientele and community members for any educational organization.

"Integrated programming is defined as a collaborative approach involving partners and various disciplines planning and implementing one or more strategies to impact micro and macro systems associated with one or more identified issues" (DeBord, 2007, ¶12). DeBord discussed how marketing can be positively affected by integrated programming. Issues programming had been part of Extension, but it was now being developed into an

integrated programming methodology comprised of two dimensions. The author described an Extension educational model, which was developed by an organizational task force appointed by the two Extension directors, Drs. Ort and McKinnie. DeBord challenged Extension professionals to use the new programming model to better market and scrutinize the organization in an effort to positively make changes. Integrated programming required multi-disciplinary involvement in resource development within economic, community and social systems. The systems, where people interact, were the primary focus for integrated programming established by Brofenbrenner's (1979) model of program development.

As programming has progressed throughout the years and different models have been used, the definition of Extension programming has been revised (DeBord, 2007). In Extension, educational programming is a comprehensive, integrated set of educational change strategies, based on documented needs and designed to produce behavioral change among targeted learners resulting in social, economic, and environmental impacts. This definition provides Extension with a foundation for the new method of integrated programming. The model for integrated programming now utilized in Extension is shown in Figure 2.

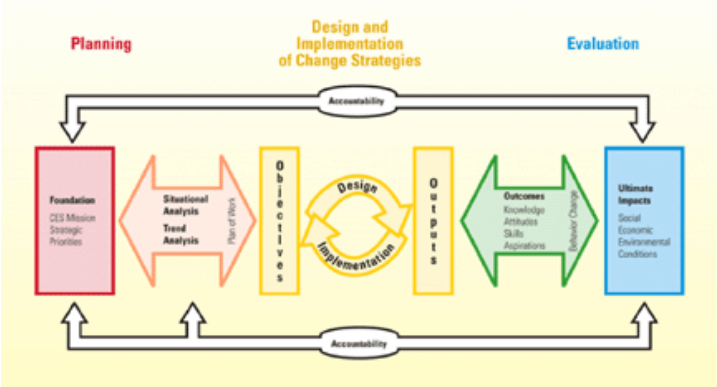

Figure 2: North Carolina Cooperative Extension program model (Guion, In Press)

Integrated programming is the basis of the new concept now being used in North Carolina Cooperative Extension to enhance the former disciplinary or base programming and one-on-one educational programming, as well as issues programming (Guion, 2009). Efforts have been made to provide a structure with guidelines and steps to help agents and specialists truly understand the implementation of integrated issues programming, such as the provision of district workshops and an individual program development workbook. Integrated programming efforts require agents working together from specialty areas to collaboratively plan, implement and address holistic societal needs and issues. Compared to the definition of the newly created integrated programming efforts introduced in Extension, issues programming and integrated programming are fundamentally identical.

Guion (in press) explained the new integrated issues programming model and the steps needed to practically initiate the new changes. The concept of integrated programming has been developed by Cooperative Extension specialists over the past few years in order to keep up with the needs of the community. Integrated programming is a combination of interdisciplinary teams working with an issues-based program strategy. Integrated programming was created to better serve the audiences with effective and purposeful programming, merging the skill base and knowledge of more than one area of responsibility:

> At the heart of integrated programming is utilizing our vast Extension network of expertise and resources- our county and district/regional faculty, state specialists, administration, staff, and external partners; coupled with the resources and infrastructure of our internal Land-Grant university system to create lasting impact on issues. (Guion, in press, ¶3)

Jayaratne, Bradley, & Driscoll (2009) spoke of the community garden integrated program as an example of true integrated programming. A joint approach is needed to develop multi-faceted change strategies to address the broad societal needs facing the public. "Integrated programming empowers local Extension educators to address community issues realistically by complimenting what they have to offer from their respective program areas" (Jayaratne, Bradley, & Driscoll, 2009, p.1). The authors noted that difficulties in integrated programming result when there is not collaboration throughout all planning procedures and when conflict arises among collaborators. Individuals must understand their role in the integrated programming process, and credit must be shared. Integrated programming is a model that works as was demonstrated by the urban garden example. Tools were provided for reporting impact and developing a strong evaluation process for integrated programming. Program areas must collaborate to focus on broad societal needs, and resources must be combined to provide a strong integrated program.

Summary

From the literature, it is apparent that as the needs of society and individuals have changed, so have the models for program development. With an increase in information and technology, educational programming has adapted to support behavioral changes in learners and learner groups. Therefore, the study of literature on the subject of educational programming was necessary in order to understand the need for a change toward an integrated programming model within Extension programming. However, with any programmatic change comes a need for support and clarification so that those initiating the change can understand and properly engage their clientele in the new procedures. Thus, an

in-depth study of the literature called for research on the perceptions of those county program professionals, who will be utilizing the new programmatic model.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The researcher developed a quantitative methodology employing a descriptive-correlational design and utilizing a census and web based questionnaire to collect data.

Population

The study population was a census of all county Extension program professionals in North Carolina employed as of September 1, 2009. This included all county Extension directors, agents, program assistants/associates, and area agents, totaling 482 individuals.

Research Methodology and Instrumentation

The questionnaire was based upon constructs suggested by DeBord's (2007) definition of integrated programming and criteria suggested by Baker and Verma (1993) and Guion (in press). The four constructs included: (1) collaboration, (2) partners, (3) disciplines or program areas, and (4) issue-based program focus. Within construct (2) partners were four subconstructs: (1) partnerships between Extension agents within a county, (2) partnerships between cross-county Extension agents, (3) partnerships with non-agents within the county, and (4) partnerships with non-agents outside county lines. Non-agent was defined in this study as any individual not employed as a North Carolina Cooperative Extension program professional. Since no prior instrumentation had been created investigating integrated programming, the researcher created an instrument from the constructs suggested through the readings. The instrument consisted of two sections. Section I included eight items exploring

each of the four constructs, including two questions for each of the four subconstructs within the construct of partners (for a total of 32 items) that used a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions. The researcher used a table of random numbers to randomize the individual items. Section II included eight items collecting data on respondents' selected personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity) and programmatic variables (e.g.., district, tenure, Extension title). As a best practice for questionnaire development, randomly selected items were negatively worded to provide stronger instrumentation.

Validity and Reliability

The researcher established the instrument's face validity by utilizing a panel of experts that consisted of members of an original State Extension Task Force appointed by Extension Directors Drs. Jon Ort and Ray McKinnie in December, 2006 to develop the model for integrated programming to be used in Extension. The expert panel included Drs. Carolyn Dunn, Jay Jayaratne, Lisa Guion, Mitch Owen, and R. Dale Safrit. Changes were then made to the questionnaire as appropriate. The questionnaire was piloted with a randomly selected group consisting of one agent from each of the three main Extension program areas (e.g., Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development), one area agent, and one county Extension director from each of the six Extension districts (geographically and politically divided) for a total of 30 individuals.

Data Collection and Analysis

Human resources personnel from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences helped to secure appropriate Extension IT personnel to compile an e-mail database of all county

Extension program professionals employed in their jobs as of September 1, 2009. On September 28, 2009, an introductory e-mail (Appendix F) was sent to participants with an attached research and information form (Appendix J) as well as a letter of support from Drs. Ort and McKinnie (Appendix E) to inform them of the purpose of the upcoming study. The web based questionnaire URL address, along with a cover letter from the researcher outlining the study objectives, was e-mailed October 5, 2009 to the participants (Appendix G). A follow-up e-mail with a link to the URL for the web based questionnaire was sent to the e-mail database two weeks after the initial e-mail to encourage participation (Appendix H). After the publicized response deadline of October 26, 2009 for completing the web-based questionnaire, which was three weeks after the initial e-mail, a follow up e-mail with the questionnaire URL was sent out to the database offering one more week for non-respondents to complete the questionnaire (Appendix I). Because of NC State University Institutional Research Board (IRB) anonymity requirements, the researcher was unable to identify and follow-up with non-respondents. A total of 227 questionnaires were completed for a final response rate of 47.1%

SurveyMonkey, a web-based survey creator, was used to collect the data, and extra security protection was purchased preventing the researcher from tracking the individuals who responded to the questionnaire. SurveyMonkey provided the researcher with only random Internet Protocol (IP) addresses and no personal information from the respondents in order to assure anonymity. Data were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet on the researcher's personal computer. Negatively worded questions were reverse coded and Cronbach's alphas were calculated by the researcher. However, when the internal reliability

was questioned based upon low Cronbach's alphas, the data were sent in an Excel file to a data analyst, who imported the data into SPSS for more in-depth analysis including exploratory factor analysis.

Cronbach's alphas were calculated on the four original constructions based upon the respondents' data as a measure of internal consistency, indicating reliability. Therefore, the constructs were tested for reliability and possessed reliability coefficients from .38 to .55. Because Nunally (1976, p. 226) stated ".50 to .60 reliability may suffice in early stages of research in a domain when determining its dimensions," the researcher had to send data to an analyst to reassess the constructs. Five new data constructs were suggested, and the researcher consulted with the graduate advisor to accept five new constructs. New Cronbach's alphas were calculated ranging from .63 to .76 thus confirming reliability of the instrument.

Appropriate descriptive statistics were calculated by the researcher to meet research objectives figure 3.2. The researcher used the Davis conventions (1971) (figure 3.1) to describe the magnitude of relationships between the coefficients

Coefficient	Description
.70 or higher	Very strong association
.50 to .69	Substantial association
.30 to .49	Moderate association
.10 to .29	Low association
.01 to .09	Negligible association

Figure 3.1: Conventions used to describe measures of association

Research Objective & Level of Measurement	Statistic to Be Calculated
(1) to describe county Extension program professionals' selected demographics: a. Gender (nominal dichotomous) b. Race/ethnicity (nominal multichotomous) c. Age (ordinal)	 a. Valid frequency (%) b. Valid frequency (%) c. Range, median, mean, & standard deviation
(2) to describe county Extension program professionals' selected professional characteristics/variables: a. Nominal Dichotomous (i.e. district) b. Ordinal (i.e. tenure and Extension title)	 a. Valid frequency (%) b. Mean, range, Valid frequency (%)
(3) to explore Extension program professionals' understanding of integrated programming (ratio)	median, mean & standard deviation for summated score
(4) to investigate possible relationships between: a. County Extension program professionals' perceptions of integrated programming constructs (interval) and gender (nominal dichotomous) b. County Extension program professionals' perceptions of integrated programming constructs (interval) and Nominal multichotomous characteristics (i.e. age, race/ethnicity, and district) c. County Extension program professionals' perceptions of integrated programming constructs (interval) and Ordinal characteristics (i.e. tenure and Extension title)	 a. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient b. Eta correlation coefficient c. Eta correlation coefficient

Figure 3.2: Descriptive statistics to be calculated to satisfy the research objectives

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Reexamining the Research Constructs

The researcher established the instrument's reliability by calculating Cronbach's alphas as indicators of reliability *post facto* for each of the four original constructs/dependent variables (table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Original construct map and Cronbach's alphas calculated from instrument

Original Construct (Cronbach's alphas)	**Original Conceptual Definition**	**Items Investigating Construct***
Collaboration (.44)	How important is collaboration to integrated programming?	1, **4,** 5, **12, 17**, 24, 25, **30**
Partnership (.38)	How can partnerships affect programming?	3, **7, 8, 9,** 13, 18, 21, 29
Discipline or program area (.55)	Are discipline areas meant to collaborate on programming?	**6, 11,** 14, 16, **20,** 23, **27, 31**
Issue-based program focus (.44)	What is the focus of programming? How are issues important to program development?	2, **10,** 15, 19, **22,** 26, **28, 32**

*Negatively worded items appear in bold

Since all resulting Cronbach's alphas were below the preferred .60 to be considered reliable in exploratory research (Nunally, 1967), the researcher then engaged the assistance of a data analyst to conduct exploratory factor analysis on the data. This analysis suggested five new constructs (using only 22 of the original 32 items), each with Cronbach's alphas greater than .60 (table 4.2). Subsequently, the researcher and her graduate advisor extensively studied the items comprising each of the five new constructs and suggested new

construct names and operational definitions that were utilized throughout subsequent data analysis. The resulting five new constructs and corresponding Cronbach's alphas are: "partnerships and collaborations" (.71), "inter-personal teamwork "(.75), "issues-based focus" (.76), "multi-disciplinary approach" (.76), and "programmatic foundation" (.63).

Objective 1: To describe county Extension program professionals' selected personal demographics

Gender

As shown in table 4.3, 63% of the respondents were female and 37% were male.

Table 4.3: Frequency of males and females participating in the study

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent
Female	141	63
Male	82	37
Total	227	100

Age

Table 4.4 reports the ranges of ages of the study respondents. The majority (47%) were between the ages of 41-55. Thirty-three percent were between 26-40, 15% were 56 years or older, and only 4% were between 22-25.

Table 4.4: County Extension program professionals by age

Age	Frequency	Valid Percent
41-55	105	47
26-40	74	33
≥56	33	15
22-25	10	4
Total	227	99*

*NOTE: Sums may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 4.2: New 5-factor construct map containing 22 of the original 32 items

Suggested New Construct Name (# of items; Cronbach's alphas)	**Suggested Conceptual Definition**	**Individual Items Loading for New Construct/Factor***
Partnerships & Collaborations (6 items; .71)	Personal partnerships and organizational collaborations are important to successful integrated programming	**17. Collaboration with others is not necessary for effective programming.** 21. I develop partnerships to more effectively program. 23. Working with other disciplines helps to bring expertise and knowledge to program development. 25. Collaboration is necessary to provide diversity of skills. 26. Integrated programming is more effective than traditional issue-based Extension programming. 29. Partnerships with Extension agents across county lines help strengthen programming.
Inter-personal Teamwork (4 items; .75)	Inter-personal teamwork among Extension professionals within the same county is important to successful integrated programming.	**4. I define integrated programming as collaboration with Extension agents inside my county office only.** 7. Working with non-Extension collaborators is a part of integrated programming. **8. Integrated programming does not include any programming across county lines.** 13. Partnerships in programming can be among Extension agents in the county, across county lines, non-Extension collaborators within the county, and non-Extension collaborators across the county.
Issues-based Focus (4 items: .76)	The holistic focus of integrated programming should be upon complex social issues.	2. Educational program development should be based on broad societal issues. 15. It is important to plan programs around societal issues. 16. It is important to integrate disciplines to address societal issues. 19. Determining societal issues is necessary for programming.
Multi-disciplinary Approach (3 items; .76)	Successful integrated programming should utilize a multi-disciplinary approach.	**27. Extension professionals do not want to develop programs outside of their discipline and content area.** **28. Extension professionals do not understand how to engage in issues-based programming.** **31. Extension agents do not want to partner on programs outside of their discipline.**
Programmatic Foundation *including program discipline areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development (4 items; .63)	Although z multi-disciplinary approach is used, integrated programming should still have a programmatic foundation in the ongoing Extension program areas.	3. Developing partnerships between Extension agents within a county is imperative to programming. **6. Extension agents should develop programs only within their program area.** **20. Collaboration within my discipline is more important than collaboration among disciplines.** **22. I would rather plan programs related to my content area rather than working with others to address broad issues.**

*Negatively worded items appear in bold

Race/Ethnic Background

Table 4.5 indicates the respondents' races/ethnicities. The majority (90%) of respondents were white (not of Hispanic origin). Seven percent were African-American (not of Hispanic origin), 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1% Hispanic, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Table 4.5: Frequency of participants categorized according to race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnic Background	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**
White, Not of Hispanic origin	193	90
African American, Not of Hispanic Origin	15	7
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	1
Hispanic	3	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1
Total	227	100

Objective 2: To describe county Extension program professionals' selected professional characteristics/variables

District of Employment

North Carolina counties are organized into six Cooperative Extension administrative districts. The majority (20%) of respondents were from the North Central District, with 19% from the South Central District, 18% from the West Central District, 15% from the Northeast District, 15% from the West District, and 14% from the Southeast District

Table 4.6: Frequency of participants categorized according to Extension district

District	Frequency	Valid Percent
North Central	42	20
South Central	40	19
West Central	38	18
West	32	15
Northeast	32	15
Southeast	30	14
Total	227	101*

*NOTE: Sums may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Tenure in Extension

Respondents' tenure in Cooperative Extension is reported in table 4.7. The majority of respondents (21%) had three or less years of service within North Carolina Cooperative Extension. Nineteen percent had 4-7 years; 18%, 10-15 years; 13%, 20-25 years; and 11%, 25 years or more. Nine percent of respondents reported 7-10 years and another 9%, 15-20 years tenure within the organization.

Extension Title

Table 4.8 shows respondents' data calculated by Extension title. The majority (35%) of respondents held the title of Assistant Extension Agent; 27% were (full) Extension Agents; 18%, County Extension Directors; 15%, Associate Extension Agents; and 5%, Area Extension Agents.

Table 4.7: County Extension program professionals by tenure

Tenure*	Frequency	Valid Percent
≤3	46	21
4-7	41	19
10-15	40	18
7-10	19	9
15-20	19	9
20-25	29	13
≥25	25	11
Total	227	100

*NOTE: Overlapping tenure divisions determined by pre-existing Extension associations' award qualifications.

Table 4.8: Frequency of participants categorized according to Extension title

Extension Title	Frequency	Valid Percent
Assistant Extension Agent	75	35
Extension Agent	58	27
County Extension Director	38	18
Associate Extension Agent	32	15
Area Extension Agent	11	5
Total	227	100

Objective 3: To explore county Extension program professionals' perceptions of integrated programming

Based upon the study data and construct means, responding county Extension program professionals "agreed" to "strongly agreed" that the two new research constructs of "partnerships and collaborations" and "inter-personal teamwork" are important to integrated programming in Extension (table 4.9). While the three remaining new research constructs' mean scores all represent that respondents "disagreed" to "agreed" that they are important to integrated programming, two of the mean scores closely approximate the "agree" level of response.

Table 4.9: Summative descriptions of county Extension program professionals' perceptions of integrated programming

Research Construct	Mean (SD)	Median
Partnerships & collaboration	3.06 (.39)	3.00
Inter-personal teamwork	3.39 (.43)	3.25
Issue-based focus	2.96 (.45)	3.00
Multi-disciplinary approach	2.67 (.53)	2.67
Programmatic foundation	2.82 (.46)	3.00
Integrated programming overall	2.98 (.27)	N/A

Table 4.10 shows respondents' levels of agreement regarding the five new research constructs when organized by each of the study's independent variables. Respondents answered questions about their level of agreement towards integrated programming based upon a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4 with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 4 being "Strongly Agree." In the ordinal scale, one could reason that 2.5 would be the median (ambivalent or neutral) level of agreement. All of the research constructs were on the positive side of responses between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." Strong levels of agreement were reported by American Indian or Alaskan Native respondents towards two of the new research constructs: "inter-personal teamwork" and "issues-based focus." Respondents within the ages of 22-25 indicated a strong positive agreement towards "inter-personal teamwork." Asian/Pacific Islander respondents showed a strong positive agreement towards "programmatic foundation." Respondents from the North Central District indicated a strong level of agreement towards "inter-personal teamwork." Respondents with the Extension titles of Assistant Extension Agent and Area Extension Agent indentified a strong level of agreement towards "inter-personal teamwork."

Objective 4: To investigate possible relationships between county Extension program professionals' perceptions about integrated programming and selected personal demographic and professional characteristics and variables.

Table 4.11 reports summative scores for each of the personal and professional characteristics and independent variables. Table 4.12 reports correlations between summative scores for each of the personal and professional characteristics and the study's independent variables. Low positive associations were found between all independent variables and the summative scores for the five research constructs.

Table 4.11: Summated scores of the independent and dependent variables

Personal/Professional Characteristics and Variables (Independent Variable)	**Summative Score (Dependent Variable)**
Personal	
Gender[1]	.104
Age[2]	.169
Race/Ethnicity[2]	.262
Professional	
District[2]	.167
Tenure[2]	.143
Extension title[2]	.218

[1] Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient [2] Eta correlation coefficient

In examining the correlations, one negligible positive association was found between the independent variable of age and the dependent variable of "issue-based focus" (table 4.12). Low negative associations were found between the independent variable of gender and the two research constructs of "inter-personal teamwork" and "multi-disciplinary approach."

Low positive associations were found between the following respective combinations of independent and dependent variables: gender and the three constructs of "partnerships and

collaboration," "issues-based focus," and "programmatic foundation;" age and the four constructs of "partnerships and collaboration," "inter-personal teamwork," "multi-disciplinary approach," and "programmatic foundation;" and all four independent variables of race/ethnicity, district, tenure, and Extension title and all five new research constructs (e.g., partnerships and collaboration, inter-personal teamwork, issues-based focus, multi-disciplinary approach and programmatic foundation).

Table 4.12: Correlations between independent and dependent variables

Independent Variable	**Specific Research Construct**				
	Partnerships & Collaborations	**Inter-personal teamwork**	**Issues-based focus**	**Multi-disciplinary approach**	**Programmatic foundation**
Personal					
Gender[1]	.129	-.095	.227	-.173	.253
Age[2]	.204	.133	.083	.164	.096
Race/ Ethnicity[2]	.218	.101	.273	.104	.271
Professional					
District[2]	.207	.194	.134	.117	.203
Tenure[2]	.191	.159	.202	.108	.139
Extension Title[2]	.148	.256	.140	.177	.162

[1] Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient [2] Eta correlation coefficient

Table 4.10: Summative descriptions of county Extension program professionals' levels of agreement toward integrated programming regarding the five research constructs as categorized by the study's independent variables

	Dependent Variable Mean (SD)				
Independent Variable (Valid N)	**Partnerships & Collaborations**	**Inter-personal teamwork**	**Issues-based focus**	**Multi-disciplinary approach**	**Programmatic Foundation**
Gender					
Male (82)	2.99 (.44)	3.45 (.40)	2.83 (.49)	2.79 (.48)	2.67 (.51)
Female (141)	3.09 (.35)	3.37 (.44)	3.03 (.38)	2.60 (.54)	2.91 (.41)
Age					
22-25 (10)	3.38 (.27)	3.58 (.31)*	2.90 (.32)	2.90 (.27)	2.95 (.39)
26-40 (74)	3.00 (.33)	3.38 (.40)	2.92 (.44)	2.73 (.45)	2.78 (.43)
41-55(105)	3.07 (.40)	3.43 (.43)	2.98 (.42)	2.67 (.55)	2.85 (.49)
≥56 (33)	3.05 (.45)	3.30 (.50)	3.00 (.51)	2.51 (.62)	2.79 (.46)
Race/Ethnicity					
African-American not of Hispanic origin (15)	3.32 (.49)	3.40 (.51)	3.18 (.43)	2.67 (.59)	3.17 (.52)
American Indian or Alaskan Native (3)	3.33 (.60)	3.67 (.38)*	3.75 (.0)*	2.44 (.38)	3.33 (.52)
Asian/ Pacific Islander (1)	3.33 (.0)	3.75 (.0)	3.00 (.0)	3.33 (.0)	3.50 (.0)*
Hispanic (3)	2.94 (.10)	3.50 (.43)	3.17 (.52)	2.56 (.38)	2.75 (.25)
White, not of Hispanic Origin (193)	3.03 (.37)	3.39 (.42)	2.92 (.43)	2.75 (.25)	2.78 (.44)
District					
West (32)	3.09 (.35)	3.46 (.44)	2.98 (.41)	2.59 (.61)	2.78 (.48)
West Central (38)	3.10 (.32)	3.43 (.48)	3.02 (.44)	2.74 (.52)	2.84 (.40)
South Central(40)	3.05 (.39)	3.30 (.41)	2.99 (.43)	2.67 (.53)	2.92 (.46)
North Central(42)	3.14 (.48)	3.50 (.42)*	2.96 (.47)	2.60 (.59)	2.88 (.44)
Northeast (32)	2.90 (.38)	3.38 (.43)	2.89 (.46)	2.66 (.52)	2.87 (.51)
Southeast (30)	2.98 (.34)	3.28 (.34)	2.84 (.45)	2.77 (.39)	2.63 (.40)

Table 4.10 Continued

	Dependent Variable Mean (SD)				
Independent Variable (Valid N)	**Partnerships & Collaborations**	**Inter-personal teamwork**	**Issues-based focus**	**Multi-disciplinary approach**	**Programmatic Foundation**
Tenure					
≤3 (46)	3.15 (.36)	3.45 (.41)	2.99 (.38)	2.74 (.48)	2.85 (.43)
4-7 (41)	3.08 (.34)	3.45 (.42)	2.99 (.35)	2.62 (.49)	2.85 (.43)
7-10 (19)	3.11 (.33)	3.36 (.44)	3.03 (.30)	2.72 (.60)	2.74 (.42)
10-15 (40)	3.07 (.46)	3.43 (.45)	2.92 (.52)	2.62 (.57)	2.84 (.50)
15-20 (19)	2.91 (.21)	3.29 (.55)	2.79 (.49)	2.74 (.50)	2.83 (.37)
20-25 (29)	2.98 (.42)	3.45 (.40)	2.89 (.49)	2.69 (.54)	2.72 (.53)
≥25 (25)	3.00 (.43)	3.27 (.37)	3.13 (.42)	2.60 (.61)	2.94 (.51)
Extension title					
Assistant Extension Agent (75)	3.11 (.34)	3.50 (.37)*	3.02 (.33)	2.78 (.49)	2.85 (.46)
Associate Extension Agent (32)	3.05 (.43)	3.36 (.46)	2.90 (.43)	2.60 (.43)	2.76 (.47)
Extension Agent (58)	2.98 (.39)	3.31 (.48)	2.94 (.53)	2.58 (.59)	2.77 (.45)
County Extension Director (38)	3.09 (.43)	3.31 (.38)	2.97 (.50)	2.61 (.59)	2.96 (.44)
Area Extension Agent (11)	2.95 (.42)	3.70 (.33)*	2.77 (.28)	2.82 (.48)	2.70 (.62)

*Strong attitudes (i.e. the researcher operationally defines strong as a mean score greater than or equal to 3.50)

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Because society's needs are rapidly changing, the concept of Cooperative Extension educational programming must also evolve, and the survival of Extension programming depends upon the ability of Extension program professionals to address both current and emerging issues facing their clientele (McDowell, 2004). Extension must find ways to serve new audiences without alienating current audiences. Clients should associate programming to Extension as a whole without a primary focus on one particular program area in order to increase support for the overall Extension mission. Furthermore, Extension is in need of a shift in its programming paradigm to gain stronger support from funding sources and to widen its clientele base. Therefore, it is necessary to have exemplary and effective educational programs of the highest quality that meet clientele needs, audiences that are aware that Extension provided the information to address those needs, and mechanisms to identify new clientele. These needs of Extension support the importance of collaboration among program areas so that Extension as an organization is strengthened and productive in its mission to focus on issues not just audiences.

Today's Extension clientele have a wider educational base and more access to information through the advancement in technology (Rockwell, Furgason, Jacobson, Schmidt, & Tooker, 1993). Therefore, Extension program professionals must provide more

in-depth educational experiences while addressing high priority societal issues. Because there is a need to focus on societal issues, individual Extension program professionals may lack all the requisite skills and expertise needed to address complex societal needs. Furthermore, it is not realistic that each professional should possess the same knowledge and expertise, such as knowledge of agricultural advancements, environmental hazards, and levels of obesity. Specialized agents are in high demand, but they cannot be supported financially by county budgets. Thus, multicounty programming is becoming a useful delivery tool. This is also a step in the direction towards integrated programming among Extension professionals. Effective issues-based programming will require Extension staff to become more strategic, focused, and articulate (Hutchins, 1992). Clearly, Extension must become even more accountable to its clientele.

As non-formal educational programming has progressed through the years and different models have been used, the definition of Extension programming has evolved (DeBord, 2007). In Extension, educational programming is a comprehensive, integrated set of educational change strategies, based on documented needs and designed to produce behavioral change among targeted learners resulting in social, economic, and environmental impacts. This definition provides Extension with a foundation for the newest conceptual model of integrated programming.

Integrated programming is now being used in North Carolina Cooperative Extension to enhance the former disciplinary or base focused programming and one-on-one educational programming, as well as issues programming (Guion, in press). Efforts have been made to provide a structure with guidelines and steps to help agents and specialists truly understand

the implementation of integrated issues programming, such as Extension programming workshops. Integrated programming requires agents to work together from specialty areas and base programs to collaboratively plan and implement educational programs to address holistic societal needs and issues.

Statement of the Problem

The review of literature on the subject of educational programming was necessary in order to understand the need for a change toward an integrated programming model within Extension programming. However, with any programmatic change comes a need for support and clarification so that those initiating the change can better understand and properly engage their clientele in the new procedures. Thus, an in-depth study of the literature called for research on the perceptions of those county program professionals, who will be utilizing the new programmatic model.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory, quantitative research was to investigate perceptions of integrated programming among North Carolina Extension county program professionals. Specific research objectives included:

(1) to describe county Extension program professionals' selected personal demographics;

(2) to describe county Extension program professionals' selected professional characteristics/variables;

(3) to explore county Extension program professionals' perceptions of integrated programming; and

(4) to investigate possible relationships between county Extension program professionals' perceptions about integrated programming and selected personal demographic and professional characteristics and variables.

Population

The study population was a census of all county Extension program professionals in North Carolina employed as of September 1, 2009. This included all county Extension directors, agents, program assistants/associates, and area agents (n= 482 individuals).

Research Methodology and Instrumentation

The questionnaire was based upon constructs suggested by DeBord's (2007) definition of integrated programming and criteria suggested by Baker and Verma (1993) and Guion (in press). The four constructs included: (1) collaboration, (2) partners (3) disciplines or program areas, and (4) issue-based program focus. Within construct (2) partners were four subconstructs: (1) partnerships between Extension agents within a county, (2) partnerships between cross-county Extension agents, (3) partnerships with non-agents within the county, and (4) partnerships with non-agents outside county lines. Non-agent was defined in this study as any individual not employed as a North Carolina Cooperative Extension agent. Since no prior instrumentation had been created for integrated programming, the researcher developed an instrument from the constructs suggested through the readings. The instrument consisted of two sections. Section I included eight items exploring each of the four constructs, including two questions for each of the four subconstructs within the construct of partners (for a total of 32 items) that used a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions. The researcher used a table of random numbers to randomize the individual items. For best

practices, several questions were randomly selected and negatively worded for stronger instrumentation. Section II included eight items collecting data on respondents' selected personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity) and programmatic variables (e.g., district, tenure, extension title).

Validity and Reliability

The researcher established the instrument's face validity by utilizing a panel of experts that consisted of members of an original State Extension Task Force appointed by Extension Directors Drs. Jon Ort and Ray McKinnie in December, 2006 to develop the model for integrated programming to be used in Extension: Drs. Carolyn Dunn, Jay Jayaratne, Lisa Guion, Mitch Owen, and R. Dale Safrit. Changes were then made to the questionnaire as appropriate. Human resources personnel from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences helped to secure appropriate Extension IT personnel to compile an e-mail database of all county Extension program professionals employed in their jobs as of September 1, 2009. The questionnaire was piloted with a randomly selected group consisting of one agent from each of the three main Extension program areas (i.e., Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development), one area agent, and one county Extension director from each of the six Extension districts for a total of 30 individuals.

Data Collection and Analysis

On September 28, 2009, an introductory e-mail was sent to participants with an attached research and information form as well as a letter of support from Drs. Ort and McKinnie to inform them of the purpose of the upcoming study. The web based

questionnaire URL address, along with a cover letter from the researcher outlining the study objectives, was e-mailed October 5, 2009 to the population. A follow-up e-mail with a link to the URL for the web based questionnaire was sent to the e-mail database two weeks after the initial e-mail to encourage participation. After the publicized response deadline for completing the web-based questionnaire, which was three weeks after the initial e-mail, a follow up e-mail with the questionnaire URL was sent out to the database offering one more week for non-respondents to complete the questionnaire. Because of NC State University IRB requirements of anonymity, the researcher was unable to ID non-respondents.

SurveyMonkey was used to collect the data, and security measures were taken to ensure those participants could not be tracked. Protection was purchased by the researcher to increase anonymity. Data were dumped into an excel spreadsheet on a personal computer. Negatively worded questions were reverse coded, and Cronbach's alphas were calculated by the researcher and then sent to a data analyst who used SPSS to analyze all data to satisfy the research objectives. Appropriate descriptive statistics were calculated by the researcher to meet research objectives.

Cronbach's alphas were calculated, *post facto*, on the four original constructions based upon the respondents' data as a measure of internal consistency, indicating reliability. The constructs were tested for reliability and possessed reliability coefficients from .38 to .55. Because Nunally (1976, p. 226) stated ".50 to .60 reliability may suffice in early stages of research in a domain when determining its dimensions," the researcher sent data to an analyst to reassess the constructs. Five new data constructs were suggested, and the researcher consulted with the graduate advisor to name and define the five new constructs.

New Cronbach's alphas were calculated ranging from .63 to .76 thus suggesting the reliability of the instrument.

Findings and Conclusions

The reader is cautioned from inferring the study's findings to any group other than the respondents due to the low response rate (47.1%). This section of chapter 5 will examine the findings from chapter 4 including: personal characteristics of the respondents; professional characteristics of the respondents; perceptions of importance of the five new research constructs to the concept of integrated programming within Cooperative Extension; and potential relationships between both personal and professional variables and the five new research constructs. Respondents answered questions about their level of agreement towards integrated programming based upon a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4 with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 4 being "Strongly Agree." In the ordinal scale, one could reason that 2.5 would be the median level of agreement or "ambivalent" or neutral level of agreement. All of the research constructs were on the positive side of responses between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." Based on the mean scores of the respondents' data, perceptions are largely in agreement because higher than 2.5 could be considered ambivalent.

The low response rate could be contributed to several factors. The researcher suggests that a tighter Extension budget year became a critical issue during the study's data collection period overshadowing the importance of integrated programming became overshadowed. The concept of integrated programming could have become an issue of unimportance to county program professionals during this time of economic crisis.

Additionally, Cooperative Extension offered an early retirement to individuals to alleviate budget restraints, thus becoming a possible contributor to the low response rate.

Perceptions of Integrated Programming

Holistic Perception of Integrated Programming

Originally, the researcher defined four constructs of integrated programming, which were used in the development of the research instrument and study objectives. The researcher hoped to gain an understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of county Extension program professionals towards integrated programming based upon these constructs, created from the limited literature on the fairly new concept of integrated programming within Cooperative Extension. The four original constructs were: "collaboration," "partnership," "discipline or program area," and "issue-based program focus." However, after calculating Cronbach's alphas for the original constructs, they were found to be unreliable for research purposes, and thus had to be reexamined. Five new research constructs and conceptual definitions were then developed using 22 of the 32 original instrument's questions, and these new constructs were found to be reliable (e.g., collaborations and partnerships, inter-personal teamwork, issues-based focus, multi-disciplinary approach, and programmatic foundation).

The researcher was not surprised by the lack of strong agreement with the five new research constructs identified for integrated programming, and there could be several explanations. First, there could be potentially other constructs which would better define the concept of integrated programming, thus resulting in a higher level of importance. Because

the original constructs were not reliable, there is a possibility that there were others that were not discovered when the new five research constructs were developed.

The lack of a strong level of agreement with the five research constructs could be contributed to several different factors. First was the aforementioned possibility of not defining the correct constructs of integrated programming. Secondly, however, is the timing of the research. Over the course of the data collection, Cooperative Extension underwent an acute budget crisis, which caused positions to be eliminated, furloughs implemented, travel budgets to be suspended, raises to be eliminated and tighter restrictions placed on Extension activities and programming. Due to the nature of this crisis, the researcher reached a possible conclusion that Extension county program professionals did not respond strongly agreeable towards all the integrated programming constructs because there was a priority shift from focusing on programming methods to sustainability of current positions and limited resources. Overall, the researcher would suggest that in the face of harsh economic restraints individuals are forced to push aside integrated programming methods and focus on local needs of their specific county and clientele.

Another plausible explanation for the lack of strong agreement, demonstrating a lower importance of the five research constructs to integrated programming, could be the lack of a clear understanding of the definition of integrated programming and the methods of implementation. It is highly possible that respondents did not understand the difference between the integrated programming model and previous models. It is also possible that many never received any training as to how to implement true integrated programming and how to define the conceptual model. Integrated programming was a new concept based upon

old concepts of issues-based Extension programming. Since its creation, the concept of integrated programming was only introduced twice to Extension professionals: once at a state Extension conference in 2007 and once at three district programming workshops in each district in 2008 which were developed in an effort to teach Extension professionals how to program properly. Unfortunately, tools defining integrated programming and its implementation were never given at either training, nor were actual methods or means of implementation laid out that clarified the definition and structure of integrated programming as it differed from traditional Extension programming.

State level subject-matter specialists conduct training for county Extension professionals within each subject area, and because they have never received any training on integrated programming, they are unable to relate to county program professionals how to understand new subject matter through the lens of integrated programming methods; therefore, many program professionals could be unskilled on using integrated programming at the county level. The training conducted was of a general nature, and no support was given to help with program-specific needs. Additionally, there has been no follow-up since the district workshops in 2008. This has possibly contributed to the lack of strong agreement that was found in the study research representing the medium but positive levels of importance that the study respondents placed on the constructs of integrated programming. The researcher believes that this is one of the strongest explanations for the research findings. The study findings could encourage Extension administration to clarify the Extension integrated programming model for county Extension program professionals. Though integrated programming was encouraged among districts, there have been only minimal

incentives with no compensation provided by the administration to encourage the adoption of the integrated programming model among Extension program professionals.

Additionally, there is no proven track record of integrated programming, aside from the limited mention of partnerships and teamwork on the current performance reviews for Extension program professionals. However, county Extension program professionals are not specifically evaluated on their ability to properly conduct integrated programming during their annual performance review. Thus, if there is limited performance evaluation, then a low importance could be placed on integrated programming. Without proper assessment of integrated programming, there is no room for improvement and thus limited motivation to successfully engage in the integrated programming model within the county program. Just as there is limited assessment, there is limited recognition for individuals who are effectively implementing the integrated programming model. The lack of recognition could be a contributing factor to a lower importance placed on correct implementation of the model. However, within program area professional associations, program professionals can be recognized for efforts of collaboration and integrated programming.

Historically, county government officials might not have seen the importance of cross-county work nor understood integrated programming. It could be possible that county commissioners have not wanted to fund positions that utilized an inordinate amount of professional time towards programming outside of their county base. This is evidenced by the difficulty in securing funding for innovative multi-county program professional positions.

Inter-personal Teamwork

The overall mean score for inter-personal teamwork represented the highest level of agreement of all five constructs with a mean score of 3.39, representing an agreement level between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." The researcher concludes that there could be several reasons for this high level of agreement. The conceptual definition of the "inter-personal teamwork" construct emphasized the importance of teamwork among Extension professionals within the same county to effectively implement integrated programming. Inter-personal teamwork was deemed most important by the study respondents, and the researcher was not surprised by this finding. Within Extension, it is often necessary to develop a strong sense of teamwork among the Extension program professionals within a county in order to properly meet the needs of the citizens within that county. Co-workers can relate to the need to network with one another in a county setting, especially since they share in information gathering via environmental scans and volunteer utilization. Subsequently, the image of the county Extension center can be enhanced in the eyes of the public when teamwork and comradeship are observed among the staff.

With the creation of a new reporting system in the state, there is a stronger push for "inter-personal teamwork." Each individual's plan of work for the year must now be based upon a county plan of work, which is supposed to be created holistically by those employees in the county. This is an effort to encourage both inter-personal teamwork and integrated programming efforts. The organizational goal is to encourage staff members to develop one county plan of work incorporating each program area in programming together towards broad county goals and societal issues. This is an improvement from the former Extension

reporting system in which collaboration and teamwork was not required in order to submit one's plan of work, thus individuals could conduct their own objectives and goals. However, there needs to be consistency among county Extension directors statewide because some could prepare the county plan of work without consulting the group or working as a team.

Because of the growing economic downturn that has affected the state, it has become increasingly imperative that Extension professionals partner with each other to bring a more varied program, meeting the needs of their increasingly diverse populations. Because Extension program professionals are hired within a certain program area, often times there is a need to pull from the resources and expertise of others within the county to help strengthen programming. Upon entering Extension, an individual must develop a relationship with other staff members to begin understanding the county's needs, demographics, resources, and current programs. The people who can best support an Extension program professional's efforts are the individuals who work with the same audiences and with the same resources. As well, as funding sources are decreasing, grants and program development are under scrutiny, and resources are often being allotted to programs with identified partnerships and collaborations to meet the needs of the intended audiences.

Specifically in the study, respondents within the ages of 22-25 showed stronger agreement that "inter-personal teamwork" was an important construct to integrated programming. The research concluded that it might be a result of the New Personnel Orientation program which is required for all new hires in 4-H. County program professionals receive one day of programming training upon employment, and those within the discipline of 4-H Youth Development receive an additional two days of program

development and evaluation training over the course of their first year of employment with Extension. The new orientation programming could be a source of training on integrated programming constructs which could contribute to a stronger level of agreement.

Respondents who held the title of Assistant Extension Agent demonstrated a stronger level of agreement towards the importance of "inter-personal teamwork" to integrated programming. One explanation to this finding could be the fact that Assistant Extension Agent is the title given to new hires having the least tenure and generally the lowest educational level. When these individuals enter Extension they often must depend on teamwork to help support their programming efforts and help provide them with knowledge and skills to program effectively. Additionally, respondents with the Extension title of Area Extension Agent showed a higher importance towards inter-personal teamwork. One explanation to this finding could be the nature of the job description of an Area Extension Agent. These professionals work in more than one county and are often dependent on teamwork with others in multiple counties to support the programming efforts which they must provide for a larger and more diverse audience. However, there was a stronger level of agreement towards "inter-personal teamwork" than the other constructs, potentially due to the fact that in the face of harsh economic times, programming with others within their county was crucial to the survival of their programs.

Partnerships & Collaborations

The second highest mean score of 3.06, representing a level of agreement between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," is "partnerships and collaborations." The researcher believes that this finding results from the very obvious need for collaboration to program efficiently.

Grants, private donors, stakeholders, federal organizations and other revenue sources are increasingly placing high importance on collaborative programming. Most grants and other financial applications require "partnerships and collaborations" to be listed as a part of the criteria to receive funding. Because many Extension programs are funded through these outside sources, it is no surprise that the study respondents indicated a high level of agreement with "partnerships and collaborations." Additionally, because a budget crisis was prevalent during the course of the study, the researcher concludes that it is an important aspect of the programming for the study respondents.

In many small counties, there are very limited resources; so "partnerships and collaborations" are not only encouraged, but are necessary for survival of the Extension program. Stakeholders want to observe strong partnerships within the county so they can be assured that their resources are reaching the broadest possible audience. Partnerships often provide the only means for developing a program for a particular audience or to meet a specific need. Extension provides research-based information, and the resources of Extension program professionals are often coveted by other organizations in the county, thus forming natural partnerships.

Issues-based Focus

Respondents showed a level of agreement with "issue-based focus" that fell between "Disagree" and "Agree" at a mean score of 2.96. However, the mean score is on the positive side of the ambivalent score (2.50), and it can almost be considered a level of agreement at "Agree." The researcher considers this finding to be positive because of the importance that is placed on programming around larger societal issues as opposed to narrowly-focused

activities. Again as the economy remains in a state of crisis, funding is allotted to programming with a focus on meeting broad societal needs. Within the program areas of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences specifically, the state program leader has placed strong emphasis on developing programs that meet one of three broad issues: health and wellness, education, and economic development. The focus from administration towards programming on societal issues potentially affected the level of agreement by respondents. Because it is important to their jobs and reinforced by administration, it is a vital component of county Extension program professionals' work. Emphasis is placed on complex societal issues by local and federal funders and elected officials. Thus, county Extension program professionals focus upon these issues when making programming decisions.

Programmatic Foundation

Study respondents had a slightly lower but still positive level of agreement towards the construct of "programmatic foundation" (mean score of 2.82). "Programmatic foundation" was conceptually defined as a necessary piece of integrated programming based upon the foundational Extension programming model created by Boone (1985). Extension program professionals receive training on the programming model when they enter their jobs. However, continual training in all program areas is not often provided. Professionals in some program areas, such as 4-H, are provided with a wealth of foundational programmatic basics through on-going training. Unfortunately, there is a stronger emphasis on training program professionals on specific programs or subject-matter as opposed to the overall conceptual model and framework for programming. The researcher suggests that there is a lack of

training and understanding of the base programmatic foundation among many program professionals. County program professionals are evaluated based upon their specific discipline, so it is not surprising that program professionals believe in its importance. It is apparent from the study findings that county program professionals still understand the importance of the base programming principles to the overall development of an integrated program.

Multi-disciplinary Approach

From the findings, "multi-disciplinary approach" received the lowest level of agreement (mean score of 2.67). Nevertheless, the level of agreement was still positive. The representation of a lower level of agreement towards "multi-disciplinary approach" can probably be best explained by the focus on meeting the requirements of one's program area. Each Extension county program professional is assigned to a specific program area in which he or she conducts programming. It is necessary to fulfill the goals and responsibilities of one's job, and thus because integrated programming takes time and resources, it can become less important than the expectations of one's particular program area. Extension specialists and state program area leaders encourage the completion of specific programs and goals within the specific program area. Because of the often overwhelming requirements of their current positions, Extension county program professionals can become narrowly focused on their specific efforts. Integrated programming requires a holistic approach, time and resources, and it can be challenging.

Another explanation of the lower level of agreement could be that Extension county program professionals are not confident programming outside of their program area. It could

be easier to program in collaboration with others who have the same priorities and responsibilities. Also, it is easier to work collaboratively with individuals who have the same background and expertise. It could be possible that county program professionals have become comfortable in their program area and programming method.

However, the findings were still positive, suggesting that county Extension program professionals do program with others from outside of their program area. One reason for this finding could be that to address broad societal needs, there is a necessity for a wide range of expertise. In order to reach broader audiences, the expertise of several individuals in various program areas is important and can strengthen programming efforts. Additionally, smaller county offices are becoming more dependent on teamwork across program areas in order to reach diverse audiences and meet needs cost efficiently and effectively. As county offices continue to operate under tighter budget restrictions, program areas are collaborating on broad programs and partnering to conserve resources and provide quality instruction and programming.

Correlations of Integrated Programming Constructs and Personal and Professional Characteristics

No strong correlations were found between any of the independent and dependent variables. One possible explanation for the lack of strong correlations in the study was that the researcher might have selected inappropriate personal and professional characteristics and variables. There are possibly other personal and professional characteristics, including program area or salary, which could have affected respondents' perceptions of the constructs of integrated programming.

The researcher calculated statistics using the new research constructs in order to determine the respondents' perceptions towards the importance of these constructs to integrated programming. The study findings noted no strong correlations between the constructs of integrated programming and any personal and professional characteristics (dependent variables).

Recommendations

The researcher encourages that the study be replicated during a time of less economic distress; therefore, there would be a hope of acquiring more participation and a clearer focus on programming without the influence of economic and job related stressors. The researcher also suggests using the literature and the five newly developed research constructs to potentially identify more valid research constructs that best fit the concept of integrated programming. The researcher also suggests expanding the Likert scale and modifying categories to include both "level of importance" and "level of competence" on the constructs related to integrated programming. The researcher suggests that the changes would strengthen the research and potentially help to understand what areas of integrated programming need more clarification and training. Since there were no questions in the instrument targeted directly towards understanding the amount of training needed, it is suggested that any future research include such questions.

It is also recommended that county Extension program professionals be better trained, so that they can better understand and utilize the integrated programming model. Members from the Extension Task Force and leaders in the integrated programming model who developed and defined the integrated programming model should develop workshops and

training modules both through online avenues and face-to-face meetings to better support Extension program professionals. It would be beneficial to have the conceptual integrated program model posted on the Extension intranet as a reference with clear explanations and a guide for implementation; thus it would be readily available. Online workshops should be created to help support programming efforts.

The researcher also recommends the provision of successful examples of integrated programming that have been conducted or are currently in progress in counties within North Carolina. Identifying individuals who are skilled in true integrated programming as role models or mentors would be helpful for others who might be new to Extension or new to a specific discipline area. Also, it is important to provide mentors and examples from all program/discipline areas so that individuals can see how the integrated programming model can be used within their assigned program area. The hiring of a state program development specialist would be beneficial to Extension so there is one person coordinating training and one person for reference on the statewide programming models.

The researcher believes that Extension administration should consistently reinforce the importance of integrated programming by rewarding individuals who are positive examples of using the model. The Extension performance appraisal and reporting systems do not have clearly defined objectives and recognition that encourage integrated programming. Therefore, without proper evaluation of a model integrated programming or recognition of one's efforts in using integrated programming there is little motivation or buy-in by county program professionals to the programming model. It is the researcher's opinion that if the integrated programming model is of importance, Extension administration must shape

recognition and evaluation of county program professionals' plans of work to include a high importance on utilization of the integrated programming model. It should not simply be expected of Extension professionals, especially without clear explanation as to the purpose and conceptual definition.

As was mentioned in the findings, the low associations found between the research variables could be due to the lack of a clear definition and model of integrated programming. During the study, the researcher was concerned by the lack of clarity that was found in both the literature and the conceptual definition of integrated programming. One major concern of the researcher was that the lack of clarity and constructs would contribute to confusion among program professionals as they tried to comprehend and implement the concept. It was determined that the integrated programming model was a "retro" concept based upon the former issue-based model of programming; however, the major difference was the necessity of a multi-disciplinary approach utilizing partnerships and collaborations during all components of the program development model developed by Boone, Safrit, and Jones (2002) currently used in the NCCE. However, there was a need for a specific conceptual definition of integrated programming which focuses on its differentiations from all other educational programming models.

Through the findings in the analysis, the researcher developed a new conceptual definition and model (figure 5) for integrated programming based upon the new five constructs discovered during the research analysis. The research suggested a need for a clear model by which integrated programming can be utilized by North Carolina Extension program professionals. Based upon the study findings and five new research constructs, the

researcher developed the following new conceptual definition for integrated programming: "Integrated programming in Cooperative Extension builds upon traditional programming models entailing planning, design and implementation, and evaluation, emphasizing an individual program professional's subject matter/discipline expertise yet utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach to address broad societal issues through inter-personal and inter-organizational collaborations and partnerships."

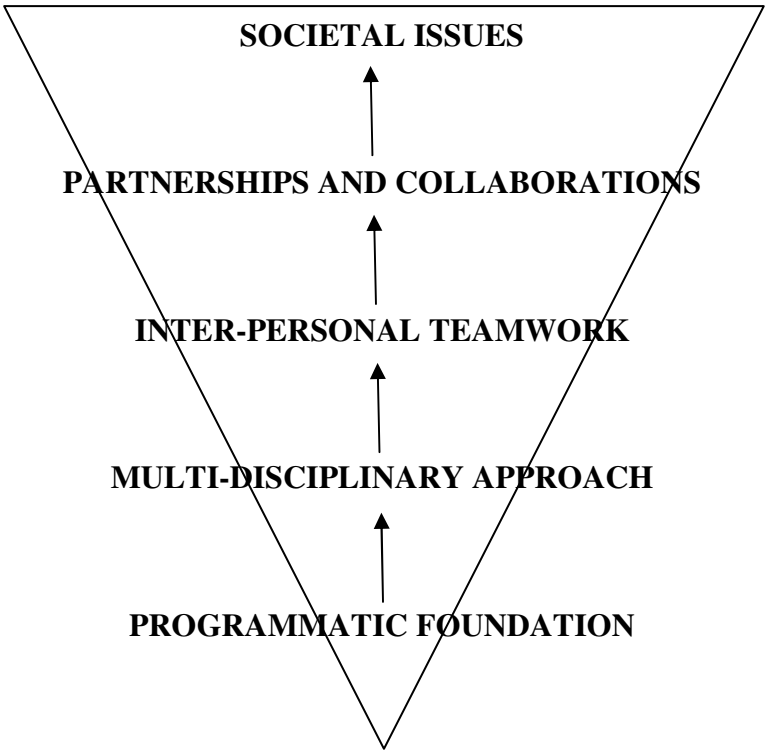

Figure 5: New conceptual model for integrated programming

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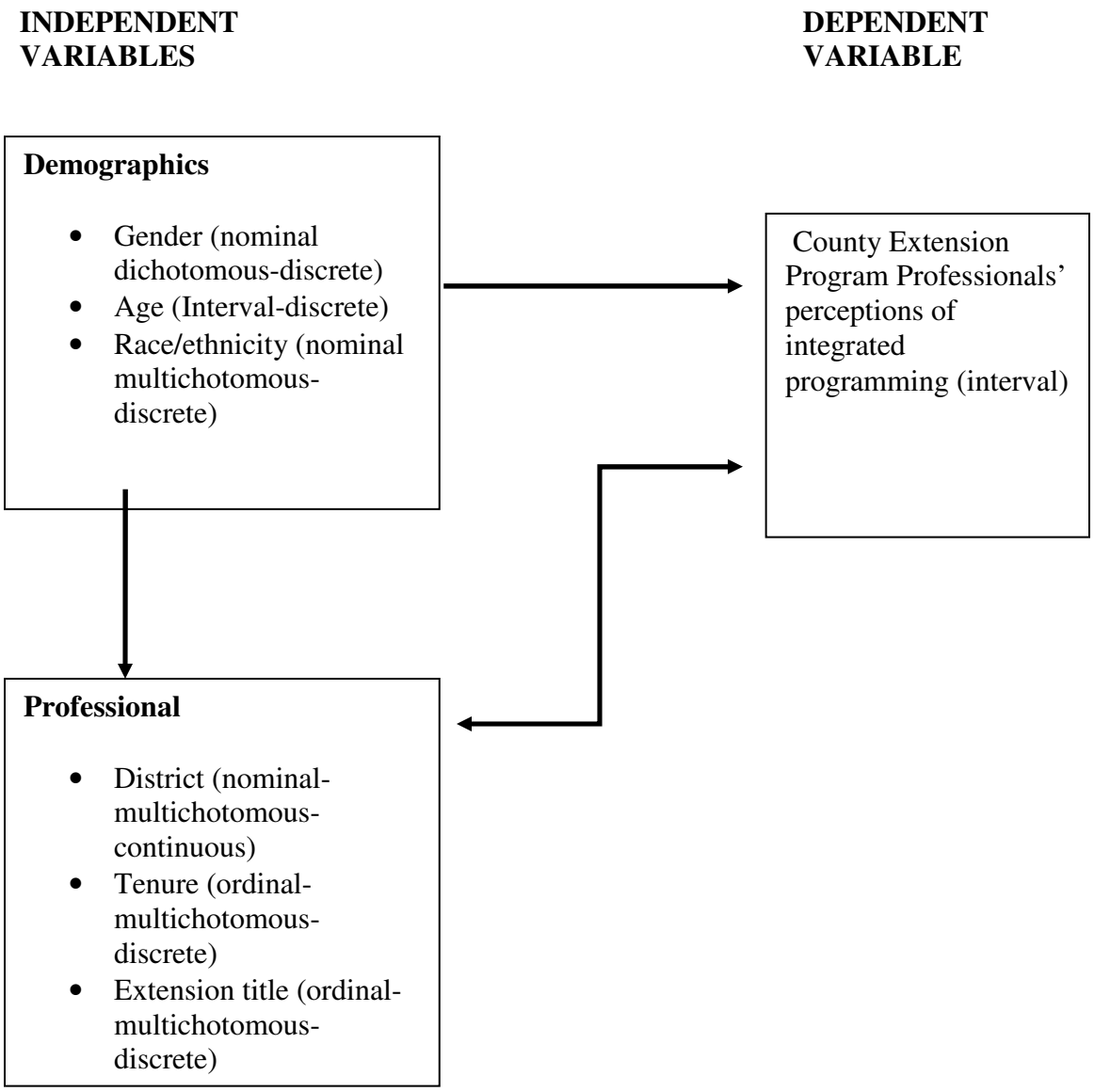
APPENDICES

Appendix A:

The Study's Conceptual Schema

A conceptual schema of county Extension program professionals' perceptions towards integrated programming



Appendix B:

The Research Instrument

County Agents and Directors Perceptions about Extension Programming

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by marking the most appropriate circle.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Collaboration on programming means working together on programming: planning, design, implementation, accountability and evaluation.	1	2	3	4
2.	Educational program development should be based on broad societal issues.	1	2	3	4
3.	Developing partnerships between Extension agents within the county is imperative to programming.	1	2	3	4
4.	I define integrated programming as collaboration with Extension agents inside my county office only.	1	2	3	4
5.	Collaboration is an important component of my educational Programming.	1	2	3	4
6.	Extension agents should develop programs only within their program area.	1	2	3	4
7.	Working with non-Extension collaborators is a part of integrated programming.	1	2	3	4
8.	Integrated programming does not include any programming across county lines.	1	2	3	4
9.	Representatives of all partners integrated programming do not need to be included in all four sub processes of program development: planning, design, implementation, accountability and evaluation.	1	2	3	4
10.	Integrated programming includes all collaborative programming despite whether the program focus is on societal issues.	1	2	3	4
11.	Integrated programming does not include involvement by all disciplines or program areas.	1	2	3	4
12.	Programming should be considered integrated if collaboration is an active part no matter the other circumstances involved in programming.	1	2	3	4

13.	Partnerships in programming can be among Extension agents in the county, across county lines, non-Extension collaborators within the county, and non-Extension collaborators across county.	1	2	3	4
14.	I work well with Extension agents from other disciplines often.	1	2	3	4
15.	It is important to plan programs around societal issues.	1	2	3	4
16.	It is important to integrate disciplines to address societal issues.	1	2	3	4
17.	Collaboration with others is not necessary for effective programming.	1	2	3	4
18.	Creating partnerships with non-Extension collaborators is Important for programming.	1	2	3	4
19.	Determining societal issues is necessary for programming.	1	2	3	4
20.	Collaboration within my discipline is more important than collaboration among disciplines.	1	2	3	4
21.	I develop partnerships to more effectively program.	1	2	3	4
22.	I would rather plan programs related to my content area rather than working with others to address broad issues.	1	2	3	4
23.	Working with other disciplines helps to bring expertise and knowledge to program development.	1	2	3	4
24.	Collaboration reduces the amount of my work.	1	2	3	4
25.	Collaboration is necessary to provide diversity of skills.	1	2	3	4
26.	Integrated programming is more effective than traditional issue-based Extension programming.	1	2	3	4
27.	Extension professionals do not want to develop programs outside of their discipline and content area.	1	2	3	4
28.	Extension professionals do not understand how to engage in issues-based programming.	1	2	3	4
29.	Partnerships with Extension agents across county lines help Strengthen programming.	1	2	3	4
30.	Extension agents do not collaborate because of their difficulty with the concept of teamwork.	1	2	3	4

31.	Extension agents do not want to partner on programs outside of their discipline.	1	2	3	4
32.	Integrated programming and issue-based programming Are the same by definition.	1	2	3	4

For each of the following items, please mark the ONE RESPONSE that best describes you.

36. ___ MALE. ___ FEMALE.

37. My age range is:

- ❑ 22-25
- ❑ 26-40
- ❑ 41-55
- ❑ ≥56

38. My district is:

- ❑ WEST
- ❑ WEST CENTRAL
- ❑ SOUTH CENTRAL
- ❑ NORTH CENTRAL
- ❑ NORTHEAST
- ❑ SOUTHEAST

39. My tenure is:

- ❑ ≤3
- ❑ 4-7
- ❑ 7-10
- ❑ 10-15
- ❑ 15-20
- ❑ 20-25
- ❑ ≥25

40. My rank is:

- ❑ Assistant Extension Agent
- ❑ Associate Extension Agent
- ❑ Extension Agent
- ❑ County Extension Director
- ❑ Area Extension Agent
- ❑ District Extension Director

41. I describe myself as:

- ❑ AFRICAN –AMERICAN, NOT OF HISPANIC ORIGIN
- ❑ AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE
- ❑ ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER
- ❑ HISPANIC
- ❑ WHITE, NOT OF HISPANIC ORIGIN
- ❑ OTHER (please specify _____)

Thank you for completing this survey!

Appendix C:

The Research Instrument Construct Map

Construct Map for Instrument

Construct	Conceptual Definition	Item Numbers Investigating Construct
Collaboration	How important is collaboration to integrated programming?	1,4,5,12,17,24, 25,30
Partnership a. Partnerships between Extension Agents within a county b. Partnerships between Extension Agents cross county c. Partnerships with non-agents within a county d. Partnerships with non-agents cross county	How can partnerships affect programming?	3,7,8,9, 13,18 21,29
Discipline or program area	Are discipline areas meant to collaborate on programming?	6,11,14,16,20, 23,27,31
Issue-based program focus	What is the focus of programming? How are issues important to program development?	2, 10, 15,19,22, 26, 28, 32

Appendix D:

IRB Form

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

GENERAL INFORMATION

1.	**Date Submitted:** 17 Aug 2009
2.	**Title of Project:** Study of the Perceptions of Integrated Programming among NC Extension County Program Agents and Directors
3.	**Principal Investigator:** Terri M. Bost
4.	**Department:** ECI Curriculum and Instruction
5.	**Campus Box Number:** n/a 700 N. Main St. Danbury, NC 27016
6.	**Email:** terri_bost@ncsu.edu
7.	**Phone Number:** 336-593-8179
8.	**Fax Number:** 336-593-8790
9.	**Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address if Student Submission:** Dr. R. Dale Safrit; dale_safrit@ncsu.edu
10.	**Source of Funding? (required information):** Internal Departmental resources
11.	**Is this research receiving federal funding?:** no
12.	**If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number:** n/a
13.	**RANK:** ☐ **Faculty** ☐ Student: ☐Undergraduate; ☒ Masters; or ☐PhD ☐ Other (specify): _____

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

Terri M. Bost	Terri M Bost *	August 17, 2009
(typed/printed name)	(signature)	(date)

*As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the **principal investigator of record**.*

Faculty Sponsor:

Dr. R. Dale Safrit	R. Dale Safrit	August 17, 2009
(typed/printed name)	(signature)	(date)

***Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature**

Please complete this application and email as an attachment to: joe_rabiega@ncsu.edu or send by mail to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III). **Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document.**

****
For SPARCS office use only

Reviewer Decision (Expedited or Exempt Review)

☐ Exempt ☐ Approved ☐ Approved pending modifications ☐ Table

Expedited Review Category: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8a ☐ 8b ☐ 8c ☐ 9

Reviewer Name Signature Date

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

Because society's needs are rapidly changing, the concept of Cooperative Extension educational programming must also evolve, and the survival of Extension programming depends upon the ability of Extension program professionals to address both current and emerging issues facing their clientele. The purpose of this exploratory, quantitative research is to investigate perceptions regarding integrated programming among North Carolina Extension county program agents and directors. The researcher will develop a quantitative methodology employing a descriptive-correlational design and utilizing a web based questionnaire to collect data. The study population will be a census of all county Extension directors and agents in North Carolina employed as of September 1, 2009.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

Thesis

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?

The (estimated) 453 county directors and agents employed in NC Cooperative Extension as of September 1, 2009.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

The study would use a census of North Carolina Cooperative Extension county Extension directors and agents (est. N = 453) employed by Extension at both NCSU and NC A&T SU as of September 1, 2009. All CES county directors and agents are legal adults and employees of NC State or NC A&T State Universities. The study population would include no vulnerable populations. Participants will be invited to participate in the study via an email from the researcher with an attached pdf of a letter signed by the Directors of Extension at both NCSU and NC A&T SU (copies attached). Additionally attached to the initial e-mail request for voluntary participation would be the Research Information Form.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

Participants must be (1) county Extension directors and/or agents (2) working for NC Cooperative Extension (3) as of September 1, 2009.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

A census will be used. (no sampling involved)

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

Theoretically, all participants are county program co-workers of the researcher. Since the researcher may not see individual respondents' data, but rather only aggregated data, it is highly unlikely that the researcher will be able to identify individual respondents' responses.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

- ☐ minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
- ☐ fetuses
- ☐ pregnant women
- ☐ persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
- ☐ persons with physical disabilities
- ☐ economically or educationally disadvantaged
- ☐ prisoners
- ☐ elderly
- ☐ students from a class taught by principal investigator
- ☐ other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

n/a

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. Make sure to include practical details regarding how research activities will be carried out.

All study participants are legal adults and paid employees of NC State and NC A&T State

Universities, so informed consent will not be obtained actively but rather assumed by a participant completing the online questionnaire; language in both the Research Information Form and survey instructions will indicate that the completion of the survey indicates consent to participate. However, each participant will be provided with the Research Information Form (attached), by attaching it to the intial e-mail informing them of the research and the first e-mail asking for their participation in the research. Potential participants will be invited to participate in the study via an e-mailed cover message from the researcher inviting their participation. The email will explain that participation is not required as a requisite for continued employment, and that no responses will be shared with any Extension administrator. The e-mail will provide the url address to the web based questionnaire. The researcher will allow three weeks from the first e-mail for responses, during which time, the researcher will send a reminder e-mail after the second week. To help with non-response, after the assigned deadline the researcher will send a follow up e-mail extending the deadline one more week and encouraging all non-respondents to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire will consist of two sections. Section I will include eight items exploring each of the four constructs (for a total of 32 items) that will use a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions. The researcher will use a table of random numbers to randomize the individual items. Section II will include eight items collecting data on respondents' selected personal characteristics (i.e., gender, age, race/ethnicity) and programmatic variables (i.e., district, tenure, Extension title). The researcher will establish the instrument's face validity by utilizing a panel of experts that consisted of members of an original State Extension Task Force appointed by Drs. Jon Ort and Ray McKinnie in December, 2006 to develop the model for integrated programming to be used in Extension: Drs. Carolyn Dunn, Jay Jayaratne, Lisa Guion, Mitch Owen, and R. Dale Safrit. Changes will then be made to the questionnaire as appropriate. The questionnaire will be placed online through the help of a technical assistant, after the password to Survey Monkey has been entered by the researcher. The questionnaire will be piloted with a group consisting of one agent in each of the major Extension program areas (i.e., agriculture, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development), one area agent, and one county Extension director from each of the six Extension districts for a total of 30 individuals. These individuals will be randomly selected to take the questionnaire online to determine the time frame and the clarity of the questions. Any feedback will be assessed and alterations to the questionnaire will be made accordingly. The pilot participants will not be asked to complete the questionnaire again, rather the pilot data will be used in data analysis. An url link to the questionnaire will be sent to the population after obtaining a list of e-mail addresses of county Extension directors and agents from NCSU Extension IT. A follow-up e-mail will be sent to the e-mail listserve two weeks after the initial e-mailing to encourage participation. After the publicized response deadline for completing the web-based questionnaire, which will be three weeks after the initial e-mailing, a follow up e-mail with the url will be sent out to the database offering one more week for non-respondents to complete the questionnaire. Data will be collected during four consecutive weeks in October 2009 using Survey Monkey licensed survey and data analysis software.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?

An estimated 15-30 minutes to complete the web-based questionnaire.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS

1. State the potential risks (physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

Some questionnaire items may be considered potentially sensitive by some participants. Consequently, the researcher will use the Survey Monkey option that is designed to specifically protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents, ensuring that e-mail identifications are not linked to specific respondents' data. The researcher will not have direct access to the file linking the code to the e-mail address since she will purchase from Survey Monkey. The design of the

survey in Survey Monkey keeps it anonymous, such that the researcher does not have access to any identifiable characteristics of individual respondents.

3. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

The research is designed to better understand the perceptions towards the new integrated programming model within Extension. No items are intended to investigate personal/sensitive information.

a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

The researcher will use the Survey Monkey option that is designed to specifically protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents, ensuring that e-mail identifications are not linked to specific respondents' data. The e-mailed invitation to participate will emphasize this, as well as that the data will only be reported in aggregate summaries. The data will be archived on the researcher's PC until the study is completed. The PC is password protected, and only the researcher and secretary have access to the password and thus the PC.

b. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

The research is designed to better understand the perceptions of Extension county directors and agents towards integrated programming. Some questionnaire items may be considered potentially sensitive by some participants. Consequently, the researchers will use the Survey Monkey option that is designed to specifically protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents, ensuring that e-mail identifications are not linked to specific respondents' data. The large number of study participants (n = est. 453) and the fact that aggregated data will be used in data analysis will make it very difficult, if not impossible, to identify specific respondents' based upon responses to individual items.

3. How will data be recorded and stored?

Data will be collected via the Survey Monkey licensed software and stored as Excel files on the researcher's PC. Participants will be identified by an anonymous code assigned to their data set through the use of the Survey Monkey. Computers containing data files are all password protected.

a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

None will be used.

b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

Data will be reported in aggregate summations.

4. If audio or videotaping is done how will the tapes be stored and how/when will the tapes be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

n/a

5. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

none

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

Indirect benefits gained by subjects would include the knowledge that their opinions are helping to better support and engage themselves and their Extension program peers across the state. There are no direct benefits to subjects. The opinions may indirectly affect the use and implementation of the new integrated programming model, which in turn could support program professionals as they work with clientele.

F. COMPENSATION

1. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.

There is no compensation of any form.

2. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

n/a

G COLLABORATORS

1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on **Cover Page**) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.

N/A

2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.

Terri Bost's Administrative Assistant, Bonnie Hartsoe, will assist with administering the questionnaire via Survey Monkey and transpose the aggregated data into Excel files.

H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project? *yes*

2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? *yes*

I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.

   Written form of the survey instrument is attached; the current DRAFT of the same instrument as a web based questionnaire may be previewed at

2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.
   Research Information Form attached.

3. Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING

*Please consider taking the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.

Appendix E:

Letter of Support for the Study to Participants

September 8, 2009

Dear North Carolina County Extension Directors and Extension Agents,

Integrated programming is an important part of Extension programming. With the implementation of this programming idea, it is helpful to administration and professionals to understand the widespread perceptions that exist among colleagues. When Extension professionals come to a common understanding of integrated programming and its uses, then it can become a stronger, more effective strategy.

Integrated programming is similar in form to what was previously termed as "issues based programming". However, the newly developed model designed by an Extension Task Force has been taught through programmatic workshops; its use by County Extension Directors and Extension Agents differs greatly. Therefore, this study will help clarify perceptions and current uses of the constructs surrounding integrated programming.

Through this research, an internal study was designed by Ms. Terri Bost to gather information relative to the integrated programming model.

We need your help to conduct this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. For complete details on the study, please see the attached Information Form for Research. Within the next few weeks, you will receive an e-mail message inviting you to complete a web-based questionnaire. You will be asked to consider factors identified from the literature that may potentially affect the level of engagement among county Extension program professionals. There is no current data gathered about the perceptions and uses of the new integrated programming model, but we hope to learn more about it.

The insights from the study will help improve the programs we currently have in place that support integrated programming. Asking employees to identify how they perceive the concepts of integrated programming could help lead to ways to strengthen the understanding and use of the programming model throughout the state. Please provide your frank opinions regarding how you perceive and utilize the constructs surrounding the integrated programming model. To ensure confidentiality, no responses will be used to identify individual respondents. Only aggregate, summarized data will be used in the final report forwarded to Extension Administration.

To ensure Extension sustains its record of the perceptions of programming, we must examine our current situation to plan for a successful future. With your help, we will have the data we need to succeed. Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this request and attention to this study.

Sincerely,

Jon F. Ort M. Ray McKinnie

Assistant Vice Chancellor, Administrator/

Associate Dean and Director Associate Dean for Extension

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

Appendix F:

Introductory E-mail to Participants

September 28, 2009

Good morning county Extension colleagues!

Since the beginning of Cooperative Extension, Extension professionals have been persistent in their programming to reach diverse audiences across the state of North Carolina. Over the years, programming strategies and models have changed to better meet the needs of our clientele.

In 2007, a new model of Integrated Programming was introduced and workshops were developed to aid professionals in their use of this model developed by a Task Force appointed by Drs. Ort and McKinnie.

As Extension adapts and changes, it is necessary to understand the expectations and new tools needed to provide efficient programming. The attitudes and perceptions of those involved in the implementation of a particular model are important to understanding whether the model is working as expected. It is necessary to assess those attitudes in order to be assist with training in the future as well as adaptations which might need to be made to increase productivity.

I am asking for your help in assessing this Integrated Programming Model so as to strengthen it and make it clearly understood by Extension county agents and directors.

Attached to this e-mail, you are receiving a pdf cover letter from Drs. Ort and McKinnie and the NC State IRB Research Information Form. Within one week, you will be receiving an e-mail containing the url to the questionnaire. I ask that you complete the questionnaire online by the noted deadline.

Your participation is totally voluntary. Your responses will be treated with total confidentiality. At no time will your specific responses be used to identify you as an individual. Two weeks after the initial e-mail, another e-mail will be sent out with the link to the questionnaire as a reminder. The participants will have three weeks to complete the questionnaire. After three weeks, another e-mail will be sent with the link as to encourage non-respondents to take the questionnaire. The researcher will be unable to identify the individuals who responded. The NC State Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this study; a copy of the Information Form for Research is attached for your prior review.

I recognize that this is a busy time for county programs due to local fairs and festivals, but ask that you make the time to complete the questionnaire online no later than **Monday, October 26th**.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the questionnaire or the study in general, please feel free to contact me (terri_bost@ncsu.edu; 336-593-8179).

In closing, thank you once again for your leadership to the North Carolina public. I look forward to your input and ideas as we attempt to make our integrated programming model more effective so as to support you and your peers across the state.

Sincerely,

Terri Bost
4-H Extension Agent

Appendix G:

First E-mail to Participants

Dear North Carolina County Extension Program Professional,

Recently, you received an e-mail and Research Information Form informing you of the study being conducted about the attitudes of Extension program agents and directors towards Extension's Integrated Programming Model. Attached to this e-mail is a letter of support from Extension Directors Jon Ort and Ray McKinnie inviting and encouraging your participation in the following research study exploring: the attitudes and perceptions of County Extension program agents and directors towards the constructs within the Integrated Programming Model.

For complete details on the study, please refer to the Research Information Form that was reattached to this e-mail for your convenience.

I serve as the researcher for this study, and I invite you to provide your frank opinions and responses to the following items. Based upon pilot tests, the estimated time required to take the entire questionnaire is only 15-20 minutes. Once you begin the questionnaire, you will be unable to save and return to complete it, so please allow enough time to complete it in its entirety.

Of course, your participation is completely voluntary. To ensure confidentiality, no responses or e-mail addresses will be used to identify individual respondents. In fact, the data collection company will randomly assign "dummy" codes to all completed questionnaires to label individual response sets, thus masking the original respondent's e-mail address. Only aggregate, summarized data will be used in the final report forwarded to Extension administration.

Please submit your responses no later than **Monday, October 26, 2009**.

To ensure Extension sustains its notable success with its programming, we must examine our current situation to plan for a successful future. With your help and cooperation with this study, Extension will have the data it needs to succeed. Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this request and attention to the questionnaire!

If you agree to take part in this study, please indicate your consent to participate by completing and submitting the online survey located at the following url link:

[insert final url here]

Appendix H:

Second E-mail to Participants (Reminder)

Dear North Carolina County Extension Program Professional,

Two weeks ago, you received an e-mail with url link to the questionnaire associated with a study being conducted about the attitudes of Extension program agents and directors towards Extension's Integrated Programming Model. Attached to that e-mail was a Research Information Form and a letter of support from Extension Directors Jon Ort and Ray McKinnie inviting and encouraging your participation in the following research study exploring: the attitudes and perceptions of County Extension program agents and directors towards the constructs within the Integrated Programming Model.

This e-mail serves as a short reminder of the importance of the study and your feedback. Your voluntary response to this questionnaire will provide valuable information to be used to help strengthen and potentially alter Extension's programming model and its use among county professionals. Your responses will help administration understand if the model is effective and correctly being understood and implemented on the county level.

I continue to invite you to provide your frank opinions and responses to the following items. Based upon pilot tests, the estimated time required to take the entire questionnaire is only 15-20 minutes. Once you begin the questionnaire, you will be unable to save and return to complete it, so please allow enough time to complete it in its entirety.

The deadline is quickly approaching, please have your submission in by **Monday, October 26**.

Of course, your participation is completely voluntary. To ensure confidentiality, no responses or e-mail addresses will be used to identify individual respondents. In fact, the data collection company will randomly assign "dummy" codes to all completed questionnaires to label individual response sets, thus masking the original respondent's e-mail address. Only aggregate, summarized data will be used in the final report forwarded to Extension administration.

To ensure Extension sustains its notable success with its programming, we must examine our current situation to plan for a successful future. With your help and cooperation with this study, Extension will have the data it needs to succeed. Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this request and attention to the questionnaire!

If you agree to take part in this study, please indicate your consent to participate by completing and submitting the online survey located at the following url link:

[insert final url here]

Appendix I:

Final E-mail to Participants (Reminder)

Dear North Carolina County Extension Program Professional,

Three weeks ago, you received an e-mail with url link to the questionnaire associated with a study being conducted about the attitudes of Extension program agents and directors towards Extension's Integrated Programming Model. Attached to that e-mail was a Research Information Form and a letter of support from Extension Directors Jon Ort and Ray McKinnie inviting and encouraging your participation in the following research study exploring: the attitudes and perceptions of County Extension program agents and directors towards the constructs within the Integrated Programming Model.

Although the deadline has passed, the researcher is extending it to Monday, November 2, 2009. The purpose of this Extension is to follow-up and allow for non-respondents to provide their feedback and participate in this study in order to have statistical data to assess and hopefully strengthen Extension's Integrated Programming Model.

If you have not responded to the questionnaire, I invite you to provide your frank opinions and responses to the following items over the course of the next 7 days.

Based upon pilot tests, the estimated time required to take the entire questionnaire is only 15-20 minutes. Once you begin the questionnaire, you will be unable to save and return to complete it, so please allow enough time to complete it in its entirety.

No more responses will be allowed after **5:00pm on Monday, November 2, 2009**.

Of course, your participation is completely voluntary. To ensure confidentiality, no responses or e-mail addresses will be used to identify individual respondents. In fact, the data collection company will randomly assign "dummy" codes to all completed questionnaires to label individual response sets, thus masking the original respondent's e-mail address. Only aggregate, summarized data will be used in the final report forwarded to Extension administration.

To ensure Extension sustains its notable success with its programming, we must examine our current situation to plan for a successful future. With your help and cooperation with this study, Extension will have the data it needs to succeed. Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this request and attention to the questionnaire!

If you agree to take part in this study, please indicate your consent to participate by completing and submitting the online survey located at the following url link:

[insert final url here]

Appendix J:

Information and Consent Form for Study Participants

North Carolina State University

INFORMATION FORM for RESEARCH
This consent form is valid September 1, 2009 through September 1, 2010

Title of Study Exploring Extension Directors and Program Agents' Perceptions of the State Integrated Programming Model
NCSU Protocol No. [TBA]
Principal Investigator Terri M. Bost, 4-H Extension Agent

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?
The study seeks to gather attitudes and perceptions regarding the State Integrated Programming Model used by County Extension directors and agents so as to strengthen the model/components and better orient program professionals.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a web-based questionnaire organized into two sections. Section I investigates each of the four constructs of integrated programming suggested within the definition of integrated programming as well as research from the literature review. For each item, you will be asked to respond to a 4-point Likert scale. Section II includes eight items collecting data on the respondents' selected personal characteristics and programmatic variables that will help us better understand you as an individual Extension program professional.

Risks
All responses will be collected and recorded confidentially, and at no time will your responses be reported or shared with you identified as the responding individual. The principal investigator will use the privacy policy and settings assigned by Survey Monkey online survey builder, and only aggregate data will be collected. No individual responses will be shared with any State 4-H Staff member or any Extension administrator. No individuals can be directly related to their voluntary responses.

Benefits
This study will help State Staff members strengthen the current uses and implications of the State Integrated Programming Model and its components so as to better orient Extension Program Professionals.

Confidentiality
The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely in electronic format (Excel spread sheets) on the PI's work computer, secured with a password accessible to the researcher and secretary. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

Compensation
You will not receive anything for participating.

What if you have questions about this study?
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher: Terri M. Bost, 4-H
Extension Agent (336.593.8179; terri_bost@ncsu.edu).

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Arnold Bell, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919.515.4420)

or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919.513.2148).

If you agree to participate, please complete the web-based questionnaire. Doing so will indicate your willingness to participate. Please feel free to keep this form for your records.